Multicultural Children’s Literature: Storying the Canadian Identity

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Multicultural education often conjures up images of classrooms occupied with children representing a variety of races, cultures, and languages. However, multicultural education has another face - one usually hidden in the shadows of its more popular image. The alternate image presents an expression of multiculturalism in which the features of diversity are not obvious but rather are subtle and somewhat shadowy.

In this study, I transported multicultural education from its common venue of a visibly-diverse area to the location of a predominately-White city situated in the Maritimes. My objective was to contribute to the small body of research focussed on multicultural education in White schools. Although Canada advertises itself as a multicultural nation, cities with a high visibly-diverse population continue to dot, rather than cover the national map. The majority of Canada still consists of mainly-White locations where minority groups represent single-figure percentages of the population.

The primary question of this research revolved around the relationship between identity and literature. The study was divided into two main inquiries. The first part investigated how children who grow up in mainly-White locations perceive the Canadian identity. My review of their notions of Canadian spanned from what they thought a Canadian looked like to what they believed Canadians valued. Once a dominant identity was acquired, I then worked to determine if multicultural children’s literature had any influence on their ideas of who could and could not be Canadian.
After nearly two years in the classroom, I came to see multicultural literature not as curriculum content but as a curriculum process. What was taught was not as important as how it was taught. In this study I examined various approaches to reading and settled upon one that not only looked at the Canadian with a critical eye, but with a hopeful face as well.


Acknowledgements

Although only my name appears on the title of this thesis, it could not have been completed without the contributions of so many people. The simple words of “thank you” do not seem to do everyone’s efforts and energy justice. I hope that each person who has helped me with this accomplishment is aware of how much sincerity goes into those small words.

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CHAPTER I – EXPLAINING THE STORY

Achieving a national identity in a pluralistic society involves the recognition and reconciliation of various groups' commonalities and differences. This statement is compatible with a strong body of Canadian research that underlines equal representation of diverse groups as essential for social peace (Feuerverger, 1994), personal empowerment (Cummins, 1996) and national unity (Taylor, 1992). The call for equal representation has instigated debates over the definition of the Canadian identity thus changing the discussion from is multiculturalism part of our national identity to how is it part of this identity. Frequently, the deliberations rest on the question, what is “Canadian?” Within macro-interactions, “multiculturalism has become a central discourse in the struggle over issues regarding national identity” (Giroux, cited in Feuerverger, 1997). The discourse that is theorized in macro-interactions is actualized in various micro-interactions (Cummins, 1996). My research interest lies in the particular micro-interaction between student and text within the discourse of “Canadian.” This thesis explores the role that multicultural children's literature can play in preparing children living in predominately-White locations negotiate diversity within the Canadian identity.

The data is presented in two parts. First, the stage is set as I document what my participants initially understood as "Canadian" and to what extent their perceptions of “Canadian” reflected our multicultural reality. Next, I explore whether multicultural children's literature assisted children in either defending or challenging their ideas.

Questions:

Data was examined in the pursuit of answers to the following questions:

*How do children from predominately-White places define Canadian? What effects does the use of multicultural children's literature have on their perceptions?*

In searching for answers to these questions, the following inquiries were also made:

1) Do my participants include visible and invisible minorities in their image of the Canadian citizen?

2) Did exposure to multicultural children’s literature encourage my participants to include various members of our pluralistic society into their notion of Canadian or did it only serve to further objectify and exoticize minorities?

3) Can multicultural texts stand on their own or are they part of a more complex relationship of attitudes, perceptions, and decisions existing both in and out of schools?

4) Can multicultural children’s literature help develop critical thinking and literacy skills in
Definitions:

**Canadian Citizen:** The notion of the Canadian citizen is both legally and socially constructed. Legally, the term refers to the rights afforded to every legal Canadian citizen under *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982). Within this thesis, my social use of the term was deliberately vague. Since a crucial part of the study was to determine what characteristics school children consciously and unconsciously attribute to the Canadian identity, I avoided imposing my view of the Canadian identity on the participants as much as possible. However, the participants were guided to direct their thinking in the context of belonging. In other words, they were asked to explain their definitions in reference to the question, "Who can be a Canadian?"

**Multicultural Children's Literature:** For this study, I chose to define multicultural children's literature as a genre that included texts portraying minorities in roles equal to mainstream Anglo-Saxon characters without reinforcing stereotypes (Dowd, 1992; Norton, 1985). I further enhanced the definition with the added characteristic that all the texts used in my research were to be situated in a setting possible within the Canadian society. In other words, stories set in other countries were mostly omitted. Often, definitions of multicultural children's literature have included tales, legends and myths set in other countries (for example, Dowd, 1992; Stewig, 1992). Because my study concerned itself with images existing within the Canadian society, it was important to exclude the latter-mentioned texts. This choice is in keeping with educators who believe that a "truly multicultural list must focus on current situations" (Ford, 1994, p. 30) and with publishers of multicultural texts who "don't consider folktales and don't consider animal stories...but look for realistic, contemporary stories" (Lee & Low Books, 1993, cover). Texts more anti-racist in nature (i.e. those which openly discuss social inequities) were also utilized providing they satisfied the above-noted stipulations.

**Minority:** According to the *Employment Equity Act* (1986), "visible minorities are persons (other than Aboriginal persons) who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (cited in Statistics Canada website, 1996). My use of the term "minority" applies to two different groups: invisible and visible minorities. For visible minorities I utilized the definition created by Statistics Canada. I did this to ensure that the demographic information retrieved from their data banks referred to the same group of people I was discussing. Invisible minorities include people whom, although white-skinned, hold a religion, language, and/or culture distinct from mainstream society. For the sake of clarity, unless otherwise specified, my use of the word
“minority” applies to both groups. Generally, the term identified individuals and groups regularly marginalized in the classroom and society because of race, ethnicity, and/or religion (Berlak, 1999).

** Aboriginal: ** Again, I referred to Statistics Canada who define Aboriginal as "those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, i.e. North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit (Eskimo) and/or who reported a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada and/or who reported they were members of an Indian Band or First Nation" (Statistics Canada website, 1996). At first I was tempted to not include Aboriginal groups in my study. This decision was partly due to my discussion with Aboriginal people who do not see themselves as Canadian citizens. After much thought, my final decision was to include texts describing Aboriginal past and present realities and treatment by different Canadian institutions. I settled upon this decision because I believe the Aboriginal People’s presence to be a vital aspect of the Canadian reality. Therefore, their experiences needed to be discussed in reference to what is defined as Canadian.

** Race:** I decided to use George Dei’s (1996) definition of race as his conception embodies the visible to the abstract. Dei argues that race is a collection of historical and contemporary social attitudes ranging from definitions based on biological differences to those based on differences in power and privilege. Consequently, not only is race a matter of skin colour, but it is also a means of “social currency because of its utility in distributing unequal power” (Dei, 1996, p. 41). Hence, racism, an attack based on race, goes beyond naming calling because of skin colour to a life-long burden of facing unfair barriers and practices. This notion is similar to that supported by Peggy McIntosh (1990) who characterizes racism as more than acts of hate targeted at those of a different skin colour but as unfair access to a body of privileges accorded to those who are White. Using Dei’s definition opened my participants to the reality that racism, - - discrimination in general - - actually benefited a particular group and it is to this group’s disadvantage for racism to cease. This is radically different from the scenario that racism is bad scenario and transcends it to a critical understanding of why racism has flourished. Furthermore, Dei (1996) underlines race as just one type of discrimination and warns that “racism should neither be subsumed nor separated from all forms of oppression” (p. 65). This inclusive look at oppression allowed my participants to speak of their own life experiences of discrimination, of various types, giving the issue of racism a familiar face.

** White: ** The study is situated in what I term a “predominately-White” setting. The term “white” has the potential to be problematic as the possession of white skin can become a point of
contention between different racial groups. For example, people of colour often claim that the white skin of invisible minorities, such as the Jewish population, provides them with the ability to "pass" in mainstream society (Harris, 1993). Yet does the ability to pass make exclusion less painful for invisible minorities? This issue became the topic of many a discussion between Sara and myself. Sara explained to me that invisible minorities endure the plight of racism in ways similar to visible minorities in the sense that both groups confront barriers of prejudice. Furthermore, invisible minorities are often placed in situations in which they have to publicly criticize racial comments. For example, most people would not make a negative comment about Blacks if a member of a Black racial group was present. Invisible minorities, on the other hand, may find themselves in a position where they encounter a racial taunt regarding their own race. Their choice is to either ignore it, thus strengthening the comment through silence, or vocally challenge the remark. As Sara notes, "both decisions hold their own type of torment" (Interview, October 15, 1997).

Because of the students involved in my research, the dilemma of the term "white" became a reality. Most of my participants are of White Anglo-Saxon decent. The teacher, Sara, shares their skin colour but is Jewish. In reference to this study, I chose to define White in terms similar to those used by other outstanding multicultural educators (Carrington & Short, 1993; Sleeter, 1995; Tronya & Hatcher, 1992) – persons from an Anglo-Saxon decent who are part of the dominant group of society. This group holds the majority of power and enjoys an advantageous role in society’s decision making process (Dei, 1994). The term White not only refers to a skin colour, but also to how institutions are arranged, which values are protected, what knowledge is deemed correct, and what privileges are conferred upon whom (Berlak, 1999; Dei, 1994; McIntosh, 1990). This group is in contrast to David Tyack’s notion of “White Ethnics” – minorities with white skin but not of Anglo-Saxon decent (AERA, 1999).

A critical aspect of the definition of White as used in my study is the recognition of White as a racial group. Through various activities, I tried to engage my participants in discussions that hinged upon their acceptance that their white skin affiliated them with a particular racial group. In other words, they were not the norm, they were just one of many. The danger of not perceiving White as a racial group is articulated in bell hooks’ remark, “Racial identities are not only Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and so on; they are also white. To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it” (cited in Harris, 1993, p.1761). Unfortunately, as I was writing this thesis, I realized that I had fallen victim to the assumptions of white as normal. Although I had been capitalizing the word
Black, I had left white in lower case, therefore reinforcing its normal status. As a result, when there is a direct reference to race, I have capitalized both black and white. When the words are being used as an adjective, the lower case remains. As I did not want to encourage my students to assume that White Canadians are the norm, I had to include discussions around Whiteness as a race.

Setting the Stage:

Most stories have a distinct setting, characters, and a main plot. This story is no different.

Location:

This study is set in a city located somewhere in the eastern provinces of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick; an area that is collectively known as the Maritimes. Choosing to do a study on racial and cultural diversity in a predominately-White area, and therefore with a low minority population, holds its own irony. Sara’s religious background is an important part of my research; however, the lack of Jewish teachers in her area made her class easily identifiable. Had I revealed the actual name of the study’s setting, I would have risked threatening the promise of confidentiality that I had made to my participants. Consequently, I decided to follow the lead of Shirley Brice Heath (1983) and give my setting the fictional name of Lakeville. Lakeville is a typical mainly-White Maritime city with a visible minority population of about 1% (Statistics Canada website, 1996).

The more specific setting of this study is West End School, the fictional name for my research site. The K-8 school serves students from a variety of socio-economic realities; this is due to the fact that the school is set in an economically-heterogeneous community. Included in the mixed neighbourhood is a section of military housing. Because the military constantly transfers its employees, some of the students have traveled around the world. The school minority student population is <$1%.

Characters:

As in all social situations, the constructed reality is formed and maintained by a variety of characters. Particular characters, both animate and inanimate, hold positions of significance within this thesis. Although the literature review, methodology, and theoretical framework sections of this thesis provide a greater understanding of the importance of the different characters, I felt that the purpose of choosing them in the first place should be introduced early.

The Class:
The main characters in my thesis story are the students in Sara Simon's grade 4/5 class during the academic years of 1997-98 and 1998-99. I chose to work in Sara's class for several reasons. First, my own teaching experience had been with grades 4 and 5 giving me a good idea of what I could expect from these students. I knew that they were young enough to say what was on their minds but old enough to exhibit reservations about what they knew was somehow not politically correct. In other words, they understood risk. This age was also favoured because of the amount of multicultural texts aimed at their age level. Finally, part of the reason I found myself in Sara's class was fate. She reappeared in my life just as I was conceptualizing this research. As a believer in fate, I knew she was in my life for a good reason. I was right.

Within the two academic years spent in Sara's class, the two populations did not vary significantly. During the first year, there were two immigrant students: Ying, a newly arrived Chinese child and Michael, a German born of Canadian parents. There was also one visible minority Canadian-born student, Steven, a child of Chinese descent who suffered from Down Syndrome. A grade 5 student named Monica belonged to a minority faith that believed in Pixies; I was never able to acquire much information on this religion. The rest of Sara's students were White Anglo-Saxon.

In the second year, all of Sara's previous grade 4s became her grade 5 students; a new group of grade 4s, including Sara's daughter, June, joined her class. June, along with Sean, a Jehovah Witness child, represented the two invisible minority students in the class. Steven had remained with Sara and, in the second year, was the only visible minority student in the class. Because Michael had moved on to grade 6 and Ying's family had moved to Toronto, there were not any immigrants in Sara's class during the second year of my study.

Critical Reading Group:

Extracted from the whole class group, was a collective of four students. Only four students were chosen because I needed to have enough grade 4 left for the next year to provide a fair comparison. Sara and I worked together to assemble a group of four grade 4 students whom we felt was a summary representation of the entire class. We eventually settled upon two females and two males who I have identified as Chris, Barb, David, and Lisa. This group became my critical reading group. Although I prefer that their personal comments reveal their personalities, I think a brief introduction is necessary. Chris and Lisa represent the lower to average achievers in the classroom. Both have always lived in Lakeville and have spent their school career thus far at West End School. Both are also from middle class families. There
appeared to be friction between Chris and Lisa that often sparked during our meetings. Consequently, each often forced the other to explain a comment before I had a chance to make my own inquiries. Barb and David represent the above average students. Unlike Chris and Lisa’s rambunctious nature, David usually only spoke when addressed. Rather than speaking, David often drew pictures, which he would give me on an almost weekly basis. I also received notes from David’s mother informing me that he thoroughly enjoyed the activities and often talked about the project at home. Barb was my adult figure. Although tiny in stature, she often articulated sentences that made her sound like the stereotypical English professor. She was very keen to be part of the group and, often peering at the rest of us over her completely round glasses, would adamantly state her case regarding different texts. Barb enjoyed a higher socio-economic background than the rest but David was the groups’ most experienced traveler, having been to other parts of Canada.

Sara:

When I first entered Sara’s class, she was four years away from retirement. Her entire teaching career had taken place in West End School. However, rather than existing in a state of inertia, Sara demonstrated the energy of a new teacher ready for any challenge. Sara is certainly a dynamic teacher. It was this enthusiasm that made her so willing to have me in her classroom. She showed constant concern over my actions in her classroom but balanced her vigilance by providing me with adequate freedom to conduct my research in an open fashion.

Besides her reputation as a fine teacher, Sara’s personal background attracted me to her class. As a member of the Jewish population, Sara understands what it means to be a minority growing up in the Maritimes. I believe Sara’s position as an invisible minority provided a different perspective on my own views, which are designed from my identity as a visible minority. Her experiences became the other side of the same coin. There were times when I questioned Sara’s actions, expecting her to play the role of the minority teacher. Her thoughtful insights taught me some very valuable lessons regarding the complexity of diversity and the multiple ways it is experienced and expressed. I hope I have managed to convey these lessons in later chapters.

School:

The second player is the institution of schools. I chose to situate my study within a school because of the institution’s historical relationship with the concept of national identity (Axelrod, 1997). As is discussed in the literature review, schools were developed as the primary tool for citizenship training (Dewey, 1900; Harney & Troper, 1975; Young, 1983).
Since then, the prevalent and acceptable social image of the national identity has continued to be reflected in schools (Axelrod, 1997; Harper, 1997). Embedded in this reflection are a variety of responses to the concept of "difference;" these reactions have coalesced around the particular time's reigning image of the Canadian identity (Harper, 1997). Hence, how schools have dealt with difference has been dependent upon the treatment of diversity within the Canadian identity as articulated by society. Conversely, how Canadian citizens perceive difference has been part of a legacy inherited from school (Bullivant, 1981). This two-way relationship has yielded results ranging from schools forcing children to forsake their own cultural identity in exchange for possible academic and economic success (Cummins & Danesi, 1990; Fordham, 1988) to the celebration of difference (Harper, 1997).

Celebrating difference is currently a popular response to difference (Harper, 1997; Lee, 1985) and would appear to be a progression from the earlier denial or suppression of diversity. However, as far as many minority groups from a variety of locations are concerned, progress does not seem to be the case (Dei, 1994; Fordham, 1988; Walsh, 1991). Several outstanding educators claim that rather than acting as sites of exploration, schools continue to indulge in the racist practice of reproducing the status quo and its accompanying inequalities (Apple, 1982; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Fine, 1993; Giroux, 1992b & 1988a; Neito, 1994). There is a wide body of research arguing the devastating effects this process can have on minority children (Cummins, 1996; Darder, 1991; Dei, 1995; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Weis, 1985). As one student noted in a study by Poplin and Weeres (1992), "This place [school] hurts my soul" (p. 11). Similarly, a smaller number of studies have documented the negative effects of a Eurocentric curriculum on White children. (Citron, 1971; Harris, 1993; Massey, 1991; Tomlinson, 1990). With these bodies of research as evidence, it is difficult to argue that the current Eurocentric curriculum is advantageous for the preparation of students for a diverse world (Diaz, 1993; Howard, 1993).

The situations and consequences described by the above educators are in keeping with data collected at West End School. To achieve a whole-school perspective, I asked all teachers to fill out a questionnaire based on diversity issues. In response to the question, "are your students prepared to work in a multicultural country", 75% of the teachers answered, "no" (Field notes, May 12, 1998).

Literature:

The third player is literature. In reflecting on how to pass on the memories of a culture, Eli Wiesel notes that "the single most powerful form of education is telling a story" (cited in
Eisner, 1991). I discovered a vast amount of research identifying literature as a powerful tool for national unity (Hirsch, 1987), immigrant resettlement (Feuerverger, 1994), cultural empowerment (Ada, 1988) and cross-cultural understanding (Banks, 1994). Even after limiting my search to multicultural children's literature, I still discovered an ample body of work speaking to the multi-usage presence of literature. Several of these references are provided in chapter 2, the literature review.

Among multicultural educators, literature is seen to be a popular means of introducing children to other cultures (Macphee, 1997; Stewig, 1992; Yokota, 1993). Multicultural literature has been described as a springboard for students to authentically experience diversity (Bieger, 1996; Norton, 1990; Rasinski & Padak, 1990). The impact of multicultural literature has also been documented in predominately-White areas (Aboud, 1999; MacPhee, 1997). In reference to this study, my desire was to encourage the participants to use multicultural literature as a means of seeing an alternative and wider vision of Canadian society, a vision that "begins with being able to untangle oneself from the mesh of one's own socio-historical situation and take...an imaginative leap into other possibilities" (Reed, d.n.k.).

Discussed in chapter 6, is the impact that these stories had on some of my participants. They wrestled with moral dilemmas, examined issues of immigration, and explored their own histories. The texts allowed the participants to worked within a medium that was familiar yet still led them to discover unfamiliar dimensions of their society (Banks, 1994; Giroux, 1988b).

Myself -- teacher, researcher, visible minority, Canadian:

Threaded among these players is my own role, or perhaps I should say, roles as I see this research from a variety of identities. Although, I have reserved my story for a different part of this thesis, I do want to introduce myself. In reference to this work, the most significant facet of my identity is the fact that I am a visible minority who has lived, and continues to live, in a predominately-White part of Canada, the Maritimes. This location is an important part of my identity. Although I have lived in larger and more ethnically-diverse cities, my self-identity has always been closely related to the Maritimes. I was educated in schools similar to the one described in this thesis. I went to school with students who resemble my participants. I have taught in these schools. The journey of understanding of where I come from, both geographically and ethnically, has been influenced by the fact that I call Eastern Canada home.

Growing up in Eastern Canada was not easy; I was forever asked, "Where do you come from?" I endlessly wished to be Canadian, defined as I believed it to be -- White, included, and normal. For a long time, I wore my skin as a visible cloak of difference. I hid behind it and
was both embarrassed and frightened to reveal any of its special nuances. Through self-exploration, I have come to understand the value of my identity as well as come to terms with its relationship with the greater Canadian identity. This change was not a sudden metamorphosis but a gradual evolution of ideas. Writing this thesis was part of the process. Today, I wear my skin as a prized possession; it is not just a marker of my Indian background but also an image of the Canadian landscape.

Establishing the Plot:

The justification of this study relies upon the recognition of two realities: 1) the duality of Canada’s demographic situations and 2) the lack of multicultural education research committed to the more homogenous areas of Canada.

Within our multicultural nation, two types of realities exist. One represents the pluralistic nature of our country, the diverse cities that often bring images of Toronto and Vancouver to mind. However, as Baker (1994) notes, “Most large ethnocultural communities are found in relatively few metropolitan centers. In Canada, they are established in one or two cities of five provinces: Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia” (p.1065). For the moment visibly diverse communities still only dot, rather than cover, the Canadian map.

The second demographic reality refers to the numerous areas that have remained predominately-White (Statistics Canada, 1996). Lakeville is such a location. Its mainly-White population is a reflection of the area of Canada in which it is situated. As the following breakdown of the provinces within the Maritimes indicates, groups outside the White population exist in small numbers. Of the 899,970 people living in Nova Scotia, 31,320 identify themselves as visible minorities while another 12,380 recognize themselves as part of the Aboriginal population. Only 7,995 of the 738,133 total New Brunswick population label themselves visible minorities while another 10,250 belong to Aboriginal groups. Prince Edward Island, with the smallest population, can only boast 1,525 visible minorities and 950 Aboriginal people among the total 132,855 population (Statistics Canada website, 1996). Compared to the rest of Canada, these three provinces currently have and annually receive the lowest number of immigrants (Mediascope, 1999). Teachers working in these areas face the challenge of preparing their students to live and work within a diversity that most have yet to witness.

Using Our Own Stories:
Educators who take on the challenge of familiarizing students with Canadian pluralism are faced with yet another obstacle: how to acquire multicultural education material relevant to their students' realities and lived experiences? At the moment, there is a dearth of multicultural education research focused in predominately-White areas. As my literature review points out, most existing studies are located in Britain (see Carrington & Short, 1993; Gillborn, 1996; Tomlinson, 1990; Tronya and Hatcher, 1992) and the United States (see MacPhee, 1997; Ramsey, 1991; Rutledge, 1982). Canadian research in this area is still in its infancy. The arena of multicultural education research continues to be largely situated in more pluralistic settings (for example see, Davidson, 1996; Feuerverger, 1994; Phelan et al., 1992).

Multicultural organizations, researchers, and teachers working in the Maritimes have repeatedly underscored the need for region-specific information with the claim that students have difficulty relating to information not locally based (Irving, 1985; Kakembo, 1994; Spalding, 1999). For example, a 1995 New Brunswick Intercultural Education Council (N.B.I.E.C.) report asked teachers whether or not they used cross-cultural materials in their classroom. An overwhelming majority responded in the negative but noted that they would incorporate a multicultural model into their curriculum if such information were locally available (Varma, 1995). Of the teachers who had used multicultural material, many stated that they had borrowed cross-cultural sensitivity programs developed in places such as Toronto, Vancouver and major American cities, only to see them fail. These programs, according to most of the teachers, did not describe a reality familiar to the students. Some of teachers even suggested that the programs did more harm than good because the students became disinterested in multicultural issues (Varma, 1995).

This lack of connection between students' lives and the imported programs can be attributed to the differences between the ethnic environments of areas such as Toronto or Vancouver and that of the Maritimes. Citizens of the former locations live pluralism on a daily basis but in many parts of Eastern Canada, diversity exists in shades more subtle than colour.

Beyond the possibility of inappropriateness, the importation of programs poses another problem: the risk of perpetuating the myth that multicultural issues are outside Maritime students' immediate realm of relevancy. In other words, using information from somewhere else suggests that the groups, which the data is about, are also from elsewhere. One teacher articulated frustration with this problem when she described the tendency to utilize programs from other cities as "a slap in the face to minorities living in the area" (Varma, 1995, p. 20).
She confronted this situation with the acute observation, "We have a rich Afro-Canadian history; why are we using material from the States?" (Varma, 1995, p. 20).

The Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) described similar frustrations in their study of African Canadians in Nova Scotia (Kakembo, 1994). In the study, Black students related being embarrassed by the small amount of Black Studies in their schools. Furthermore, they felt belittled and disempowered by the constant portrayal of Blacks as powerless slaves (Kakembo, 1994). Stories that spoke to the African Canadian contribution to the Maritimes, and Canada as a whole, were often blatantly absent from the official provincial curriculum (Woodrow, 1987). The disconnection between Black students and the school curriculum may help to explain why “the Maritimes has the highest rate in Canada of African Canadians who do not complete high school” (Spalding, 1999, p. 37).

School exclusion is not a fate experienced by the Black community alone. In a recent address to the Atlantic Regional Aboriginal Issues Think-tank, Mi’kmaw, Patricia Doyle-Bedwell, coordinator of the Dalhousie University Transitional Year Program for Blacks and Aboriginal students, noted, “One of the advantages that I have had is that I was not educated in Nova Scotia, or Canada for that matter (Field notes, March 27, 2000). Although the disappearance of residential schools may provide the impression that education is no longer a crushing experience for Aboriginals, such is not the case. According to Knockwood (1982), a Nova Scotia educator, while one generation struggles to recover from residential schools, a new generation is just beginning its demeaning relationship with school.

Visible minority and Aboriginal students in Prince Edward Island do not fare any better than their counter-parts in the rest of the Maritimes. In an interview regarding multiculturalism on the Island, Ms. Alexandra McCallum, coordinator of the Prince Edward Island Multicultural Association, noted how students are continually teased in school for being different while “the teachers and principal do nothing” (Interview, November 10, 1999). She also believed that longevity of minority presence did not make a difference:

If you’re White and Christian then you are an Islander but if you’re different in any way, then you are forever from away; even if your family has lived here for generations. When Joe Giz became the Premier, I thought that the Lebanese people would be more accepted. But that didn’t happen. I don’t know what everyone is afraid of. They have to come out of their small holes. Especially the children; how else will they be able to survive in the Canada of the future? (Interview, November 10, 1999)
Although the problems are slightly different, each of the three provinces live a double dilemma: minority groups have failed to experience their representation as a part of the Canadian identity while White students have continued to consider their own presence as natural and minorities as foreign. Neither circumstance has provided the conditions for a harmonious and peaceful nation.

What Can be Done?:

Unfortunately, very little has been done in the Maritimes that suggests a continual commitment to enhancing cross-cultural understanding between groups. Of the three provinces, Nova Scotia has attained the greatest progress (Henry et al., 2000). Currently, the Nova Scotia Provincial Government provides operational funding to the Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia. The Black Cultural Center is funded through the Department of Tourism and Culture. Of most significance is the establishment of the African Canadian Services division of the Department of Education; a service created to help facilitate the implementation of the recommendations from Kakembo’s (1994) report on education, *Redressing Inequality—Empowering Black Learners*. (Nova Scotia Government website, 2000). The Department of Education has also recently employed an Aboriginal educational officer to overlook programs involving Native Studies. Despite these changes, the impact remains small. Reviews of the curriculum before and after the changes demonstrate that attempts to broaden cross-cultural understanding have failed to reach the official curriculum. Consequently, the Black and Aboriginal communities in Nova Scotia continue to experience isolation and disempowerment in the region (Henry et al., 2000; Moodley, 1991).

Unlike the Nova Scotia government, which does provide operational funds to the Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia, the government of New Brunswick grants only $1,500 a year to each multicultural organization. This year, the New Brunswick Multicultural Council was forced to close its doors due to a lack of funding. As a result, New Brunswick currently does not have a provincial multicultural organization. The Government of New Brunswick does have a *Policy on Multiculturalism* (1986) but not a multicultural act. As a result of the policy, the Ministerial Advisor Committee on Multiculturalism was established. Although its purpose is to view policy and provide advice to the provincial government, the group has very little lobbying power and is, in essence, window dressing.

My examination of currently-applicable New Brunswick Department of Education documents (New Brunswick, 1986; 1989; 1992) suggests that although the intention for a greater presence of multicultural education is discernible, discovering accompanying action is
extremely difficult. For example, In 1989 the Department of Education created The Ministerial Statement on Multicultural/Human Rights Education, a document that committed the department to the incorporation of cross-cultural concerns in any future educational developments. Yet less than two years later The New Brunswick Commission of Excellence in Education's To Live and Learn: the Challenge of Education and Training (1993) failed to mention any issues related to diversity or racism. At the moment, two employees within the curriculum sector of the Department of Education mainly address attention to diversity issues: the Native Studies director and the social studies officer whose portfolio includes multiculturalism.

The lack of resources provided by New Brunswick appears generous when compared to Prince Edward Island whose government does not provide any funding to multicultural organizations (Arthur, 2000). The Policy Board and Cabinet of Government adopted the Provincial Multiculturalism Policy on March 15, 1988; however, the policy has never been specifically supported by legislation (McCallum, 1999). In the arena of schooling, the provincial Department of Education does employ one Aboriginal education officer. Multicultural issues are left to the discretion of individual schools.

One of the barriers encountered by those trying highlighting multicultural issues in Prince Edward Island is the fact that demographically, Prince Edward Island is the most unilingual and unicultural province in Canada (Smith-Green, 1997). Although the Prince Edward Island Multicultural Council holds hope that the Provincial Government is becoming more proactive in multicultural and anti-racist issues, “the lack of acceptance by the majority of Islanders of people in the multicultural community continues to be identified as a major concern to be addressed on PEI” (McCallum, 1999, p. 2).

If I Can't See You, You Can't See Me:

One of the reasons that the problematic issues surrounding diversity and difference are seldom broached can be linked to the lack of understanding regarding racism. There is a tendency to perceive racism as overt acts of hatred rather than muffled movements of indifference. Several local minority groups and multicultural organizations have accused Maritime schools of recognizing only the most overt forms of racism while refusing to address its quieter forms (Kakembo, 1994; N.B.M.C. et al, 1997; Spalding, 1999). Enid Lee explains such reactive behaviour as the consequence of the belief that active strategies against racism either cause or intensify the problem. In her Letters to Marcia (1985) she notes, “Raising the topic might be compared to breaching a code of conduct. Some of us believe that the more we
talk about racism the worse it becomes. The implication is that if we don’t talk about it, it will go away” (p. 6). Many schools and communities add credit to Lee’s observation in their refusal to take a proactive approach to racism in the fear that such attention is “counter-productive” (Tomlinson, 1990, p. 11) and likely to provoke racist behaviour (Ijaz, 1982). Neito (1994) also notes schools’ avoidance in “bringing up potentially contentious issues in the curriculum in fear that doing so may create or exacerbate animosity and hostility among students” (p. 403).

However, to do so, as Fine (1993) points out, is to impose silence on information someone has deemed unacceptable to hear. According to Fine: “Silencing is about who can speak, what can and cannot be spoken, and whose discourse must be controlled” (1993; p. 33).

In the school district in which West End School is situated, there is certainly a silencing of racism. During a conversation with one of the superintendents, I expressed concern regarding the absence of a policy dealing directly with overt racism. In response, he explained that policies regarding race relations existed under the heading of student “health and welfare;” a statement claiming that every student has the right to a safe and healthy environment. When I noted that the issue of racism was absent, he claimed that it was inferred in the health and welfare section. Upon my inquiry regarding the possibility of creating a policy dealing directly with racism behaviour, the superintendent replied, “We have no such policy; we don’t like to flag these issues” (Field notes, December 12, 1994). Such actions are reminiscent of children standing in the corner with their hands over their eyes believing that if they cannot see you, you cannot see them. To this date, local school boards have yet to engage in any significant activity suggesting that they are willing to flag issues dealing with racism.

Is Racism a Demographic Issue?:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1994, p. 2-3)

Partnered with a lack of understanding regarding issues of diversity and racism, is the second reason often used to explain a lack of multicultural education programs – demographics. A common obstacle faced by multicultural and anti-racist advocates attempting to bring information into mainly-White areas is the mindset that a low number of minority students renders cross-cultural education into a low or non-priority issue (Miller, 1997; Tomlinson, 1990). For example, in her study on predominately-White British schools, Tomlinson (1990) noted that, “schools with few or no minority pupils make little effort to revise their curriculum, or develop policies, and tend to dismiss multicultural education as… ‘a very low priority’, ‘not our concern’, and ‘likely to be counter-productive’” (p. 11). Although there are differences
between schools in Britain and those in the Maritimes, similar accusations have been made by local educators (Kakembo, 1994; Spalding, 1999).

Although racial conflicts are not a daily crisis situation, various local minority groups do believe that there is a growing atmosphere of racial intolerance (Baker & Varma, 1999; Henry et al, 2000; Spalding, 1999). Educators familiar with the situation argue that a large part of the problem is due to White students' lack of familiarity with the lived realities of members of minority groups (Calliste, 1994; Baker & Varma, 1999; Kakembo, 1994). Their collective stance is supported by comments from minority citizens living in the Maritimes. Says one Prince Edward Island resident, “I’ve lived in Canada for 25 years, and when I moved here a year ago, I felt like I was a new immigrant all over again. Here, either you’re an Islander or an outsider. And if you’re an outsider...you’re an immigrant” (Women’s Network, P.E.I., 1998, p.vi)

Finding a Resolution:

A viable solution to these problems is the development of well-researched programs that address the local situation. However, before such programs can be created, an understanding of the involved students' knowledge and beliefs regarding issues of diversity must be acquired (Clews, 1999). Successful curriculum must begin with the knowledge of the students and their lived realities (Ada, 1988; Dewey; 1902; Freire, 1970). As Shor (1992) notes, “What students bring to class is where learning begins. It starts there and goes places” (p. 44). The call for "greater personal ownership and commitment to anti-racist policies" (Lee, 1994, p.23) that has been made by various concerned educators and multicultural organizations can only occur if participants feel a sense of connection to the initiatives (Banks, 1994; Irving, 1985; N.B.M.C. et al., 1997). In this case, educators must have knowledge of the majority Anglo-Saxon students' understanding of diversity and where it fits in creating and sustaining the Canadian identity.

As the refusals and recommendations regarding multicultural education continue, so does the schooling of Maritime children. The majority of these students, who are White and Anglo-Saxon, are still being educated with information that is not only confined within their own beliefs and views but also oblivious to the existence of other Canadians. So what can be the consequences of maintaining this path? First there is the danger that Whites not exposed to other cultures will acquire the belief that their world is the only reality (Citron, 1971; Miller, 1997). This is mainly because "members of majority cultures are so accustomed to seeing themselves reflected everywhere they look that they take it for granted that their values, beliefs,
and expectations are universally accepted." (Miller, 1997, p. 260).

If such beliefs are left unchallenged, the resulting environment for minority groups can become uncomfortable and unfulfilling. For example, in Baker’s (1994) study on immigrants living in New Brunswick, many of her participants expressed a sense of social exclusion. Several believed that their feeling of alienation was due to the majority group’s inability to see them as equals. Alexandra McCallum of the Prince Edward Island Multicultural Association expressed similar sentiments:

Minors find it hard to live in P.E.I. because often they do not feel welcomed. White people here are so afraid of difference mainly because they don’t see it very often. But you know, even this is not an excuse. The world is changing and we have to prepare our children to live in this world. How can they do this if they are afraid of their own shadow? We’re not doing them any favours by letting them believe that they are the regular Canadians and everyone else is a foreigner. (Interview, April 14, 2000)

As Ms. McCallum points out, the repercussions of a lack of appreciation for pluralism are not just tangible for minority groups. White students failing to acquire an understanding of diversity are equally robbed of opportunities for economic, social, and personal growth (Howard, 1993). Hence research is necessary to achieve a holistic understanding of White students’ perceptions of their pluralistic country and the diverse citizens that reside therein. The following statement, cooperatively written by various New Brunswick multicultural organizations, attests to the need to educate all children about diversity:

One could say of certain areas in New Brunswick where there are no “other” ethnic groups, why must we adjust our curriculum? It must be realized that our children are not always going to live in a small village, town or city and therefore must be prepared for the larger world outside, be it Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver or the United States. We must instill in them the knowledge and values that will prepare them to work and live effectively and harmoniously in our culturally diverse society. (N.B.M.C. et al., 1997, p. 2)

If we are to prepare children for tomorrow’s world, then they must be educated in a way that facilitates their success regardless of what part of the globe they choose to live in.

How is this Story Different from Others?:

There are particularities of this work that make it unique. As I have noted, this study is uncommon in location and topic. The setting for this research veers away from the more common visibly-diverse venues for research on multicultural education. Furthermore, as MacPhee (1997) notes, “Research regarding the use of multicultural literature in a white classroom is minimal at best” (p. 33). The emphasis on White children’s thoughts regarding
pluralism adds another voice to the verbalization of multiculturalism as a topic of concern for all Canadians, not just for minorities.

Another rare characteristic of this study is the emphasis on children's voices. As Neito (1994) contends:

education transformation cannot take place without the inclusion of the voices of students...students' perspectives are for the most part missing in discussions concerning strategies for confronting educational problems. ....if we believe schools must provide an equal and quality education for all, students need to be included in the dialogue, and their views, just as those of others, should be problematized and used to reflect critically on school reform. (p. 396 & 398)

Although a few years have passed since Neito noted the absence of students' voices, their presence is still not extensive. A large body of research is available on issues surrounding schooling, identity, and diversity (Axelrod, 1997; Cremin, 1988; Cummins & Danesi, 1994; Harney & Troper, 1979); however, very little includes the actual voices of the children described (see Neito, 1992; Poplin & Weeres, 1992). This study journeys in a different direction. While I do refer to various researchers, teachers, and others working in the field of multiculturalism, it is the children who do most of the talking.

Whenever possible, I encouraged my participants to think and talk critically about what they believed. Later chapters demonstrate that this was not always easy. However, as Fine (1991) points out difficult issues do not disappear simply because we refuse to discuss them. It is better to provide students with the skills to face and discuss dilemmas. I hope that through this study, my participants did receive some of these skills and their stories regarding them are clearly told.

Finally, this research is unique in its tone. While reviewing the existing literature on multiculturalism, I felt an overwhelming sense of despair. Confronted with such convictions as "We live at a precarious point in time in which relations of subjection, suffering, dispossession and contempt for human dignity and the sanctity of life remain at the center of our social existence" (McLaren, 1996, p. 268), I found the sentiment of hopelessness almost tangible. In my own study, there are pages that paint a bleak world; some of the stories are harsh. For example, Sara's personal experiences with racism were difficult for me to hear. Although I never faced the same level of overt racism, her retelling of events did remind me of times when I felt like an outsider. Also, some of the beliefs articulated by the students sometimes made me wonder if they would ever welcome a multicultural nation. Yet despite our uncertain world, there needs to be a sense of hope. Eisner (1992) underlines hope as an essential component of
change. Comparing change to a garden, he astutely observes, "Almost always the emphasis is on the negative aspects of schooling, and although pulling weeds is helpful, their elimination in a garden does not ensure the presence of flowers; flowers have to be planted" (p. 315). Although I aimed at pulling out some weeds, I did not want to leave behind a barren landscape. Like Eisner, I wanted to plant some flowers, express hope. Essentially, this narration is essentially about hope. Hope derived from the knowledge that there are teachers like Sara working to expose their students to a world beyond their immediate surroundings. Hope from witnessing how students can develop critical thinking skills when provided with the opportunity to do so. And hope in knowing that, like my participants, most children want a peaceful world that is respectful of all of its citizens.

The Current Story Line:

In essence, this thesis is about the Canadian identity; how it is perceived and who is included in our perceptions. Harris (1993), in her delineation of the hegemony of identity warns, "Because definition is so often a central part of domination, critical thinking about these issues must precede and adjoin any definition" (p. 1763). Her comment is especially crucial in reference to children as they will have the power and vision to create the future Canadian identity. Consequently, it is important that all children, including those growing up in mainly-White areas, encounter regular opportunities to ponder how Canada's pluralistic makeup influences our national identity.

The word "identity" has universal and timeless appeal. Whether through evil or virtue, the notion of identity has had the power to motivate both the unification and division of a nation. Some of our greatest human-created tragedies (the Holocaust, Rwanda, Kosovar), have been fueled by the refusal to accept a multi-racial national identity. In Canada, our search for identity has involved a national debate over multiculturalism and its position in the Canadian situation. As Cummins & Danesi (1990) observe, "In essence it [the debate] seems to be a battle over the Canadian identity: are we stronger because of our cultural diversity, or weakened by institutionalizing it?" (p. 2). This question has been explored at great lengths in the academic and political field (Giroux, 1991b; Taylor, 1992). Part of the purpose of this thesis is to bring the debate to our children and discover what our future Canadian citizens think-- especially those who have yet to witness the alternative realities of other Canadian locations. After all, definitions regarding national identity is not just an issue of semantics; it is also one of peace.
CHAPTER II – LESSONS LEARNED

When it came time to do my literature review, I was struck by the variety of issues contained within my research topic. This really brought home for me how tremendous a role schooling and literature play in our lives. While it was not always possible, I tried to limit myself to Canadian content.

Citizenship and Schooling:

A basic premise in my thesis is that schools are a dominant force in national identity formation. This hypothesis flows from the suppositions of various educators from different moments in society who have noted that the institution of schooling and the image of the national citizen are concepts which continuously reverberate off of one another (Axelrod, 1997; Bullivant, 1981; Dewey, 1902). In other words, the ideals reflective of a particular time’s notion of citizenship and the treatment of difference can often be found embedded within the school curriculum. Conversely, the messages that echo between school walls help impress upon greater society the image of the favored citizen (Axelrod, 1997; Harper, 1997; Young, 1983). The school’s endorsement of a specific representation of the Canadian identity has not been restricted to simply advocating particular mental and social characteristics such as nationalism, family values, and work ethic; it has also included campaigns for specific physical characteristics such as how a real citizen should look and sound (Harney & Troper, 1979). Both aspects of this directive have been communicated through the various levels of the apparent and hidden curriculum (Cummins & Danesi, 1994; Harney & Troper, 1979).

A particularly thorough description of the historic relationship between schooling and citizenship is Cremin’s (1988) American Education: The Metropolitan Experience. In his text, Cremin argues that public schools were originally designed to govern children towards a citizenship devoid of individual differences. He contends that schools used curriculum to legitimize the textualization of citizenship to denote obedience and conformity. This definition satisfied three basic intentions actively pursued by public schools:

1) to provide industries with low-skilled and obedient workers;
2) to sculpt students’ beliefs and attitudes to conform to American ideals;
3) to protect the national identity by quickly assimilating the substantial arrival of immigrants (Cremin, 1988).

According to Cremin, the production and protection of a singular identity served both economic and social needs. Within and beyond school walls society was celebrating the
American identity, an identity that appeared to require safekeeping from undesirable foreign influences. Schooling provided such defense by compelling new immigrants to adopt the so-called American ideals:

While students were sorted and educated differently to satisfy the needs of industry, educators still wanted them to undergo a common socialization process to prevent fragmentation and to insure that "American" values would remain dominant and undiluted. Fearing that the arrival of this "illiterate, docile mass" would "dilute tremendously our national stock, and corrupt our civic life," educators were called upon "to assimilate and amalgamate these people as part of our American race, and implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government. (Cremin, 1961 cited in Noguera, 1995, p. 196)

Although social control and Anglo-Saxon molding designed the original blueprints for public schooling, present day educators argue that the goal of social obedience is still a priority. Freire (1970) defines this goal as the "objectification" of the student; Noguera (1995) labels the process as "violence;" Fine (1993) defines it as "silencing." Regardless of the descriptor, the common belief is that students are inhumanly manufactured into one desired identity regardless of the original fabric of the individuals.

**The Canadian Story:**

As there is a substantial amount of data pertaining to citizenship and schooling, I restricted my review to the Canadian context. Like their American counterparts, Canadian schools have pursued objectives aimed at producing a desired citizenship. Paul Axelrod's (1997) historical analysis of the Canadian education system highlights a social process designed to promote a particular identity and acceptable behaviour norms through the institution of schooling. These aspirations extended beyond school expectations and also revealed social expectations:

...schooling policy -- indeed, Confederation itself -- sought to address the particular educational interests of Protestants and Catholics, and of French and English Canadians. But other groups reflecting the population's diversity -- Native peoples, Blacks, and a new wave of European immigrants -- were subject to educational edicts that stressed the virtues of cultural uniformity over cultural accommodation. (p. 68)

However, as Axelrod points out, the emphasis on uniformity failed to create a unified national identity: rather the constraining atmosphere led segments of society to express discontent and disconnection with Canadian society:

The experiences of Aboriginal and Black Canadians illustrated a paradox that bedeviled the country through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
Educators, politicians, and religious leaders stressed the virtues of a unified national culture in a way that appeared to diminish the status of certain minority groups. On the one hand, the concept of assimilation suggested inclusiveness and social equality; on the other hand, it privileged Canada's dominant racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities. As the nation's population grew and diversified, the tensions deepened and spilled into the realm of schooling. (p. 80-1)

Criticism of the Anglo-Saxon privilege system began to spread as some groups attempted to establish their own schools. Conversely, those protective of the traditional system began to spread fear, fear of the foreign presence. Newspaper editorials in the 1880s demonized separate and bilingual schools describing them as "nurseries...of an alien tongue...alien customs...alien sentiments, and...a wholly alien people" (Alexrod, 1997, p. 82). Unfortunately, Cummins and Danesi's (1990) study of the attitudes towards bilingualism suggests that a fear of difference is not a thing of the past:

If multilingualism is regarded as a valuable asset both for the individual for the society, then why do so many Canadians vehemently oppose the teaching of heritage languages? Why do many parents who demand that their children be given the opportunity to become bilingual in French and English protest angrily at the fact that their tax dollars to be used to teach the languages of immigrant children? Why is it appropriate to promote multilingualism in private schools... but not in the public school system? Is multilingualism good for the rich but bad for the poor? (p. 2)

The questions put forth by Cummins and Danesi suggest that the promise of schooling is not about being educated but rather being educated in a particular manner depending on the student's status in society.

Canadian educator, John Young's (1983) In Multicultural Education: Dilemmas and Contradictions in an Elementary School Setting describes an immigrant school experience similar to that of Axelrod's. His text outlines the process through which the "purity" of the Canadian identity was protected. First, immigration restrictions regulated the type of immigrants that could enter the country. Secondly, those who made it through were subjected to a retraining program disguised as public schooling. They were taught to cherish Anglo-Saxon values such as punctuality and discard any conflicting home cultural values.

Young supports much of his thesis that Canadianising the immigrant student was an intention that influenced every aspect of schooling by referring to the work of Troper. Troper, both on his own and with other researchers, has contributed significantly to the understanding of Canada's historic treatment of different ethnic groups (Abella & Troper, 1982; Harney &
Troper, 1975; Troper, 1979). The work most related to my topic is Harney and Troper's (1975) *Immigrants: A Portrait of Immigrant Experience 1980-1930*. Their section on education is an interpretation of schooling as a means of encouraging new Canadian students to abandon their home identities for the prized Canadian identity. They argue that "the child who owed his parents filial loyalty confronted a teacher who demanded a new national loyalty; to prove his would-be Canadianness the child was encouraged to prove that he was different from his parents--to think, act and speak "English," "White," or "Canadian" (Harney & Troper, 1975, p. 109). Canadian schools employed the image of the reformed immigrant child as a political symbol of a nation successful in the creation of productive and loyal citizens.

The portrayals set forth by Axelrod (1997), Harney and Troper (1975) and Young (1983) are consistent with the political intentions regarding the assimilation of Aboriginal and immigrants as articulated by late 19th and early 20th century educators and politicians. The dominant social sentiment of the time is captured in McLeod's (1975) "A Short History of the Immigrant Student as 'New Canadians.'" Looking as far back as the 1800's, McLeod discusses how Egerton Ryerson, prominent educator in Upper Canada, defined the school as having two functions: "social control and Canadianisation" (McLeod, 1975, p. 21). Ryerson's anti-immigrant attitudes are clear in the following speech given to his fellow educators:

> Many of these immigrants will doubtless add both to the intelligence and productive industry of the country. But is this the character of most of them? From their former wretched circumstances and still more wretched habits, they are notoriously as destitute of intelligence and industry, as they are of means of subsistence. ...It is therefore of the last importance that every possible effort should be employed to bring the facilities of education within the reach of the families of these unfortunate people, that they may grow up in industry and intelligence of the country, and not in the idleness and pauperism, not to say the mendacity and vices of their forefathers. (cited in McLeod, 1975, p. 23)

McLeod provides other social artifacts demonstrating that Ryerson was not alone in his views. Included in his article is the proposal from Quebec's Protestant Teachers Association suggesting the creation of a new British-centered Canadian history textbook which "would be suitable for all Canadians and promote patriotic sentiments" (Cited in McLeod, 1975, p. 22). The proposal is accompanied with a response from the *Toronto Empire* applauding this curricula decision: "The request seems reasonable, and embodies, moreover, a highly important suggestion -- the desirability of imparting to all our young people correct ideas of their national history so as to engender a royal and patriotic love for the country and a dutiful obedience to the state" (Cited in McLeod, 1975, p. 22). Based on these statements, McLeod makes the
observation, "Clearly, the school was being recognized as the national assimilator" (1975, p. 23).

Educator, J.T. Anderson, was another staunch supporter of the school's directive to destroy all undesirable foreign elements. His text, The Education of the New Canadian (1918) relates several social assumptions that provided the layout for public schools. These include the assumptions that:

1) national unity and progression was contingent upon a common language;
2) the Anglo-Saxon culture should be the prototype for the Canadian culture;
3) the assimilation of immigrants is essential for social peace;
4) groups that resisted assimilation were a threat to the Canadian identity.

Anderson (1918) contended that although the presence of the foreigner was an unwelcome reality, proactive measure could help deal with the growing phenomenon: "We may despise the "foreigner" and all that is non-English, but...this element is here to stay, and its presence is bound to make an impression upon our future citizenship. The paramount factor racial fusion is undoubtedly the education of the children of these non-English races" (1918, p. 90). In his speech, "The School and the Newer Canadian," given at the 1919 National Conference, Anderson again focused on the role of the school in dealing with the foreigner: "The great battle for better Canadian Citizenship is being fought by our school teachers. They are the generals in the 'Home Front'" (Cited in Young, 1983, p. 18). The war plans for the "great battle" was the British-based curricula in which "English was enthroned as the king of the subject-matter fields" (Axelrod, 1997, p.61).

The prejudicial attitude articulated by Anderson, Ryerson, and others did not quickly dissipate but rather cast future shadows over other sectors of society. In 1947, Prime Minister Mackenzie King advocated immigration policies that not only encouraged the denial of any group that did not act and look like the accepted image of the Canadian but also provided preferential treatment to those of British decent. King defended the biased policy as the true desire of the people of whom he led, a desire to keep the Canadian identity pure: "There will, I am sure, be general agreement with the view that the people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population" (Cited in McLeod, 1975, p. 22). Similar sentiments to keep the Canadian identity free of "a fundamental alteration" later led King to turn his back on the lives of a boatload of doomed Jewish refugees forcing them into the hands of Nazis death camps (Abella & Troper, 1982).

The Indian Problem:
Immigrants were not the only group to be schooled onto a desired cultural path. The original inhabitants of the American continent, the Aboriginal population, were also subjected to a plan of redesign. In many ways, their story is much more tragic. Residential schools are one of the most brutal stories of how formal education can be used to modify the undesirable into the Canadian identity.

To counter what he saw as the "Indian problem," Egerton Ryerson proposed in 1847 that residential schools be established in Canada as a means of civilizing Indian children (Titley, 1986). The purpose of the schools reflected a broader social plan for Aboriginal people. Residential schools were designed to segregate Aboriginal children from their adult generations, forcing them to abandon their cultural identity. Names were changed and families splintered as assimilation heralded the promise of a better future. However, this promise was half-hearted. Little effort was given to ensure a quality education; attention to the academic curriculum was weak with school staff rarely trained as educators. Rather than reading and writing, the children's days were filled with manual and menial labor. Students were molded to be workers, not thinkers; to quote Freire (1970), they were "objectified."

Contemporary researchers such as Frideres (1998) and Titley (1986) note that the endeavor to bring First Nations People closer to the Canadian image citizen has resulted in the near eradication of various communities and the traditional knowledge base. Furthermore, Titley notes that the purported plan to "civilize" Aboriginal children was severely limited. Notions of civility were certainly not accompanied with any desires of equality. Never, were Aboriginal people seen as equal, or even having the potential, to be equal to Anglo-Saxon Canadian citizens (Knockwood, 1992). Rather, the underlying theme characterizing most Aboriginal-European relations in Canadian history is one of assumed superiority over Aboriginal people. As Alexander Morris (1880), a British agent who arranged the initial treaties with Aboriginal peoples, preached, "Let us have Christianity and civilization to leaven the masses of heathenism and paganism among the Indian Tribes; let us have a wise and paternal government faithfully carrying out the provision of our treaties...They are wards of Canada, let us do our duty to them" (p. 296-97).

Over two decades after Morris's speech, the paternal instincts towards Aboriginal remained dominant. In a 1902 debate in the House of Commons, the Minister of the Interior declared, "Our [the government] position with reference to the Indian is this: We have them with us as wards of the country. There is no question that the method we have adopted will
bring these people to an improved state....There is a difference between the savage and a person who has become civilized, though perhaps not of a high type” (Cited in Frideres, 1998, p. 152).

Recent revelations have disclosed Canada’s residential schools as sites of horror where Native children were beaten and exploited, stripped of their language, forced to forget their history and made to feel ashamed of whom they were and were not (Cummins, 1996; Frideres, 1998). In 1997, the Canadian Federal Government officially apologized for the residential school situation; however many victims remain unsatisfied (Frideres, 1998). Victims have argued that not only did the government deprive them of their Aboriginal identity but also the resultant damage has impaired their ability to reach their full potential as productive citizens. I confronted this reality firsthand while teaching a Native Studies course. During a presentation on her experiences at a residential school, one of my students simply stated: “School did not teach me math, writing, or science. They told me that I will learn to be Canadian. Really, I learned to be nothing” (Field notes, October 13, 1998). This process has since been labeled as genocide by Aboriginal people (Frideres, 1998). It was not only the death of a people, but of a culture and a spirit.

Schooling Difference:

Despite the time, it appears that the notion of what it means to be Canadian has always been tightly bound with the beliefs regarding the treatment of difference. This theme runs through a recent work by Harper (1997) entitled, "Difference and Diversity in Ontario Schooling." Using Ontario schools as her site of reference, Harper illustrates that whether in regards to Aboriginal or minority children, the school's reaction to difference, and consequently the evolution of multicultural education, has always been linked to the dominant vision of the Canadian identity. Harper argues that the school's approach towards diversity has been the subtext of what society desired the Canadian image to be: "Historically, schools have had a variety of reactions not only to the question of "difference" among students but also to the related task of instilling a sense of national identity" (p. 192).

Harper's (1997) review of Ontario schooling and diversity divides the treatment of difference into five reactions. Harper describes the reactions as though they follow each other in separate and chronological sequence. This is somewhat misleading as variations of these reactions may appear at different times and in different places. Nevertheless, her framework does provide an understanding of the different approaches schools have taken towards dealing with difference. Harper's’ five reactions are:

1) suppressing difference: aggressive assimilation,
2) insisting on difference: separation and segregation,
3) denying difference: equal treatment for all,
4) inviting difference; celebrating diversity,
5) and critiquing difference: interrogating power and identity (p. 192-3).

The first, “suppressing difference: aggressive assimilation” (p. 193), presents a description of schooling similar to those noted by Cremin (1988), Cummins & Danesi (1994), Harney & Troper (1975) and Young (1983). Schools were responsible for eradicating any non-Anglo-Saxon traits deemed incompatible with the Canadian way of life:

In broad terms, Canadian unity, prosperity, and harmony -- indeed Canadian identity -- was inextricably linked with conformity to Anglo-Saxon culture and Western ideals. Strong beliefs in the superiority of Christianity, Anglo-Saxon culture, Western industrialization, and capitalism, supported by theories of Social Darwinism, meant distinguishing heathen from Christian, Aboriginal from European, non-Anglo-Saxon from Anglo-Saxon, and Canadian from New Canadian, and, for the good of the country, eliminating the “inferior” or undesirable culture – the heathen should become a Christian; the Aboriginal, a European; the non-Anglo-Saxon, British. (Harper, 1997, p. 194, italics in the original).

Harper’s second stage of “insisting on difference: separation and segregation” (p. 194) did little to expand the perception of what constituted a Canadian. This time Harper notes that differences were believed to be biological. Thus the school’s reaction to difference was “premised on the notion that difference is natural, predetermined, and unassailable...requir[ing] accommodation rather than elimination” (p. 194). However, rather than expand the Canadian image to include differences, the stress on difference became a reason to believe that foreigners could never become truly Canadian. Citing Bullivant (1981), Harper notes that the focus on difference "ensured separation between racial and ethnic groups so that British blood lines and cultural superiority would not be "weakened" by mixing biologically or culturally with other groups. Thus Canada would remain powerfully British in character and a model for the foreigner to emulate" (p. 196).

For the third response, Harper notes that the pendulum swung from identifying difference to “denying difference: equal treatment for all” (p. 197). This reaction has been commonly known as the "colour-blind" approach where skin colour was purposely deflated as a racial issue. Instead, of recognizing the impact that skin colour had on people’s lives, everyone was seen to be the same. However, as Harper wryly notes, this "same" looked a lot like the White Christian male.
Vivian Paley (1979), in her story, *White Teacher*, makes the same observation regarding her experience in an American school:

I also saw that having a dozen other Jewish children in the class didn't make being a Jew more acceptable in that room, because not one of the teachers accepted us as Jewish children. They insisted we were all just children, which meant we were all Gentile children since that was only kind of child they thought about or talked about. The more my parents provided me with roots in my own culture, the more I felt my differences from the culture of the school. Failing to be recognized as a Jew, and knowing I was not a Gentile, I did not know what I was at school. (p. 11-12)

Like Paley, many minority children experienced the same sense of alienation. As Paley's example points out, this feeling was not necessarily induced by small numbers but simply by being different. By ignoring racial and cultural differences, schools promoted an identity that lacked diversity and remained reflective of the image of the White norm.

Harper's fourth identified reaction, "inviting difference: celebrating diversity" (p. 199) took form after W.W.II. At this time, Canada experienced a need to create an identity distinct from Britain and the United States. The emphasis was on creating a country and an image that was inclusive of all. The Canadian identity was re-designed as a celebration of different cultures. Canada arrived at the mosaic. Harper argues that the need for a new identity was so prevalent that Canada even legislated our pluralistic characteristic in the 1971 policy, *Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework*, a policy which acknowledged cultural pluralism as fundamental to Canadian identity, indeed, as the very essence of Canadian identity" (Harper, 1997, p. 199).

Harper notes that the school's response to the inviting difference reaction is "most evident in recent school multicultural programs. ...ensur[ing] all children be given the opportunity to not only develop and retain an identity informed by the historical roots of their culture and community but also to understand and appreciate other ethnic and cultural groups" (p. 199). Unfortunately, this response was mainly "an additive rather than an integrative process" (p. 200) with an emphasis on information about food, festivals, and folklore of various cultures. As Harper points out, this approach minimizes the significance and impact of difference:

...if ethnic identity can only be played out at the margins of the curriculum, as an additive rather than integral part of the curriculum, then the identities produced will be viewed as marginalized and exotic. ...Most importantly, the celebration of diversity tends to make all differences relative. The notion that human beings are all different ignores how power determines which difference
makes a difference in the quality of life. Ignoring issues of power can undermine the efforts of minority groups and others in their struggles for equity and justice. (p. 200)

The final reaction of "critiquing difference: interrogating power and identity" (p. 201) provides an alternative to the food and festival approach and is an examination of "how and when difference is produced and treated" (p. 201). Based on the assumption that various social institutions, including schools, operate on racist practices and beliefs, this reaction argues the need to discuss the power of difference between the races. Harper concedes that such thinking has yet to establish itself in many schools.

Today, the issue of ethnic diversity and its relationship with school continues to be one of hot debate. Many still argue that "teaching children about individual cultural backgrounds and ideologies, [will] separate them from the right to their Canadian identity" (Cited in Cummins and Danesi, 1990, p. 4). Such sentiments portray ethnic identities as in opposition to the Canadian identity and detrimental to a student's sense of belonging. The argument is akin to Harney and Troper's (1975) observation that minority were forced to decide between a home and school identity and Anderson's (1918) contention that difference undermines national identity. The ideas at the turn of the century appear to be still with us.

Voices of Dissent:

In opposition to the call of uniformity is a body of educators dedicated to revealing how schools act as "agents in the economic and cultural reproduction of an unequal society" (Apple, 1982, p. 95). One specific group, collectively known as "reconceptualists" (Giroux et al., 1981; Pinar, 1975), argues that the curriculum is advantageous to some and disabling to others. Mainstream students are able to locate their values within the curriculum and so are validated by the current schooling process. Non-mainstream students, on the other hand, are victimized by the present educational system due to the dismissal of their cultural beliefs and knowledge (Apple, 1982; Giroux et al., 1981).

Cummins' (1989; 1996) theoretical framework regarding the empowered vs. disempowered student also confronts a school system fraught with inequalities. He argues that schools have a history of disempowering minority students by not including their culture and language in the school environment. Not treated as legitimate citizens in the school, these students later fail to see themselves as rightful citizens of the nation (Cummins, 1996). Cummins (1989; 1996) maintains that the rejection that many minority students encounter is representative of the rejection experienced by minority communities within the greater society.
Both the school and society exist on power relations which define who is oppressive and who is oppressed. Cummins (1989; 1996) argues for a reformulation of the school paradigm to include all students to participate in the school experience and become active members within the greater society.

Another prominent educator critical of contemporary school operations is Paulo Freire. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) greatly impacted the educational world in its criticism of the division between the rich and the poor. Judging the educational process as oppressive, because it does not allow the non-elite to fully participate as citizens, Freire argues that the poor lack "conscientizacas" which casts them into a "culture of silence" and forces them to be objects rather than participants of society. According to Freire (1970), the school has been the decisive factor of whether the students become pawns or thinkers. Either the school strives to maintain the status quo (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1993) and indoctrinate the poor "to adapt to the world of oppression" (Freire, 1970, p. 65) or it functions as a forum for students to act as "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire, 1970, p. 68) and allows both teacher and students to engage in the "quest for curriculum" (Freire, 1973, p. 58).

Bickmore (1991, 1993) has made similar summations in her observations that citizenship action has reached a crisis because of the lack of direct social participation demanded of the youth. In her article "Learning Inclusion/Inclusion in Learning: Citizenship Education for a Pluralistic Society" (1993), Bickmore contends that "one of public education's most important roles is to help young people learn how they can engage in handling the challenges and conflicts of their (local and wider) communities, as a foundation of peace and democracy" (1997, p. 1). Instead of being seen as a barrier to learning, Bickmore suggests portraying conflict as a means of learning and appreciating oneself and others (1991, 1993, 1997). Embedded in the vision of conflict as a learning opportunity is the recognition of all citizens as equal participants in society.

Like Bickmore, Banks (1989, 1990, 1993, 1994) underlines the representation and participation of all citizens as prerequisites for social peace. Within a pluralistic nation, he notes that it is imperative that all citizens operate within a multicultural cognitive framework. Predicting chaos for any society unable to prepare its citizenship for a pluralistic society, Banks (1990) argues that "a society that has sharp divisions between the rich and the poor, and between whites and people of colour, is not a stable one" (p. 211). Therefore, schools must help students become "reflective citizens who can...care about other people in their communities and to take personal, social and civic action to create a humane and just society"
(1990, p. 211). Imperative in the existence of a humane and just society is the ability for each person to express their individuality in a manner not harmful to others. Schooling, as it has existed, would have difficulty proving that it has helped all students develop such an ability.

The treaties of Banks (1971; 1989, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1998), Bickmore (1991, 1993, 1997), Cummins (1989, 1996), Freire (1970), Giroux (1991b, 1992a, 1992b, 1996) are all situated within the context of diversity and hence may initially appear to be distant from work in predominately-White areas. This is not the case. Each of these educators champions achieving the greatest potential of each individual student regardless of their background and the environment in which they live. The need for inclusion and understanding beyond our personal spheres become requirements for learning despite the cultural makeup of the classroom. Learning about others strengthens our collective national identity regardless of where we live within that nation.

Blindness:

The need to educate White students on issues of difference cannot be perceived as simply making life easier for minorities. As Katz (1978) notes,

Racism is manifested not only in the minority ghettos of the cities but equally in the White ghettos of the suburbs, in the South, in the North. Racism not only affects people of colour but Whites as well; it escapes no one. It is a part of us all and has deeply infiltrated the lives and psyches of both the oppressed and the oppressor. (p. 4)

Rather than be perceived as a dialogue for minority groups, cross-cultural understanding must be framed as essential for the healthy development of all people. Racism is in effect an illness, robbing people mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually by preventing perpetrators from reaching their full potential as thinking, acting and caring beings. In 1965, the United States Commission on Mental Health stated that "...the racist attitude of Americans which causes and perpetuates tension is patently a most compelling health hazard. Its destructive effects severely cripple the growth and development of millions of our citizens young and old alike" (cited in Katz, 1978, p. 11). Maritime-based researcher, Cynthia Baker, puts forth the same supposition in her holistic model on personal health. In different studies, Baker demonstrates how minorities lacking social acceptance have experienced deterioration of their mental health. Her paradigm attests that racism undermines a person's, as well as a society's, ability to achieve complete mental wellbeing (Baker, 1994; Baker & Varma, 1999).
Also looking at mental health, Citron (1971) blames racism for stifled intellectual growth. He claims that teachers who allow their White students to believe that their culture is responsible for all of humanity's progress are doing the children a disservice:

Children who develop in this way are robbed of opportunities for emotional and intellectual growth, stunted in basic development of the self so that they cannot experience or accept humanity. This is a personality outcome in which it is quite possible to build into children...the unconscious fear and rejection of different human beings. Such persons are by no means prepared to live and move with either appreciation or effectiveness in today's society. (Cited in Katz, 1978, p. 14)

Like Citron, Massey (1991) also argues the detrimental effects that a monocultural education can have on White children. According to Massey such consequences may be:

1) A lack of curiosity about other societies and cultures.
2) A lack of imagination in conceiving of alternative ways of organizing or resolving people's problems, encouraging the illusion that the limits of one's world are the limits of the world itself.
3) A stunting of the growth of critical faculties. This is because the child sees the world from the narrow perspective of his/her own culture and rejects all that cannot be included in that.
4) A sense of arrogance and insensitivity.
5) A fertile ground for racism. (p. 76)

Howard's (1993) "White in Multicultural Education" positions cross-cultural understanding as necessary for economic success. He notes that today's corporate world demands that employees be capable of working in a diverse community. Working within diversity mandates being able to work with others without falling prey to the prejudices that risk destroying our society:

Ironically, these negative responses to diversity are destructive not only for those who are the targets of hate but also for the perpetrators themselves. Racism is ultimately a self-destructive and counter-evolutionary strategy. As is true for any species in nature, positive adaptation to change requires a rich pool of diversity and potential in the population. In denying access to the full range of human variety and possibility, racism drains the essential vitality from everyone, victimizing our entire society.

...The future belongs to those who are able to walk and work beside people of many different cultures, lifestyles, and perspectives. The business world is embracing this understanding. We now see top corporate leaders investing millions of dollars annually to provide their employees with skills to function effectively in a highly diverse work force. ... Diversity is a bottom line
issue for employers. Productivity is related to our ability to deal with pluralism. (p. 39)
The collective message of all of the above educators is that working within diversity is no longer a minority group issue. In order to survive we all have to learn to co-exist in peace.

**Literature and Identity:**

The curricular focus of this thesis is on the influence of literature in the formation of national identity. Far from being neutral, reading is an activity seeped in social values and expectations (Giroux, 1991). In other words, what we read has a great impact on who we are, what we identify with, and what we believe. Because of the power that literature yields in identity formation, it has become a contested terrain in the dialogue involving multiculturalism and national identity. Although schools have used numerous avenues to impress upon students the notions of preferred citizenship, one of the most strongest influence has been, and continues to be, literature within the formal curriculum (Hirsch, 1987; Swartz, 1992). Given this, it is not surprising that the type of literature that should be used in schools has fallen into debate. At the center of the debate is the question of what type of texts should hold prominence in the classroom: those from the traditional cannon, the so-called classics, or those written from a spectrum of voices.

Critics of the multicultural movement prophesize that a move away from the traditional cannon will herald the destruction of a unified national identity (Hirsch, 1987; Schlesinger, 1991). Noting that literature can be used as a powerful tool for the production of a unified citizenry loyal to a national identity, Hirsch (1987) reasons that all American students should be exposed to a specific body of literature so that they can share a collective body of cultural knowledge. He predicts that the inclusion of non-traditional works will sever the threads that bind Americans together. Showing little understanding of the plight of many minority students, Hirsch claims that a prescribed list of books will actually promote equality for all students by providing familiarity with the same works. The fact that the listed texts reveal a strong Anglo-Saxon disposition appears to be of little consequence to Hirsch. In a similar vein, Porter (1996) laments the breakdown of Western culture, which he argues is due to its citizens' lack of familiarity with classic literature which has been brought on by the infusion of minority works.

Multicultural educators, in response, argue that the current use of the traditional cannon creates a false national identity blind to its own diversity (Banks, 1994; Giroux, 1991). They reason that since nations have traditionally identified strongly with the literature produced by
its citizens, it is important to have representation of all citizens (Banks, 1994; Giroux, 1991; Henry et al., 2000; Norton, 1990). Furthermore, the suggestion that a more inclusive curriculum will threaten the national identity is declared a form of racism:

An example of cultural racism is the canon of "great works" by White, mainly male, writers and dramatists that is incorporated in the curricula of educational institutions and considered the only material appropriate for mainstream audiences. It is assumed that this body of writing represents the best of human culture and creativity. (Henry et al., 2000, p. 276)

The Story of the Textbook:

The resource that has enjoyed the most time and influence in the classroom is the textbook. Unfortunately, textbooks have been repeatedly accused of generating and reproducing a narrow and misleading view of society (McLeod, 1975). Various studies accuse textbooks as ignoring the realities of minorities such as Blacks (Swartz, 1992; Thomas, 1993) and First Nation People (Head et al, 2000; Frideres, 1998). Loewen (1995) argues that despite the fact that citizens need to observe the histories and realities of all people living in their nation, most textbooks are "an embarrassing amalgam of bland optimism, blind patriotism, and misinformation" (p. 4).

Canadian textbooks have also fallen under critical eyes. In an analysis of social studies textbooks across Canada, Aoki et al (1974) determined that the attention given to minority groups was, at best, sparse with most information considered in context to the British or French perspective. The researchers also noted that minority groups were often depicted as historic rather than active members of contemporary society. Portrayal of minority groups focused on cultural artifacts such as clothing or holidays making them appear fossilized and unprogressive in nature. The inadequate coverage also worked to diminish the complexities of a pluralistic society. Aoki et al. (1974) felt students were only presented with a heroic and romantic version of Canadian society where the symbol of the mosaic advertised a fair and just nation. They sensed only slight attention given to such concerns as language tensions, unjust immigration policies, or Aboriginal concerns. In essence, students were given a vision of Canada as an untroubled Anglo-Saxon society. This presentation, Aoki et al. contend, discouraged students from critically judging the mainstream's treatment of difference.

Making assertions similar to that of Aoki et al., Robinson (1974) argues that "schools have been seen primarily as agents of socialization for Anglo- or French-conformity" (p. 35). This process is evident, claims Robinson by the reality that "the ethnically pluralistic nature of Canadian society has not been adequately accounted for in curriculum development for
schools" (p. 35). He contends that until textbooks are written in a manner that discusses cultural conflicts, tensions such as those existing between Aboriginal communities and the greater Canadian society will not peacefully dissolve.

David Pratt's (1981; 1984) content analysis of history textbooks also reveals a lack of space for citizens outside the Anglo-Saxon membership. Pratt argues that the model of society suggested by most of the circulating textbooks is discordant with the pluralistic reality of Canadian society. Students are presented with a largely monocultural society with only a sprinkling of racial diversity. Any racial diversity that is mentioned is presented in a sanitized manner thus disguising any unrest. Since a "child's basic political and social orientation is established during his years in elementary school," (Pratt, 1984, p. 290) the textbook's misleading depiction of Canada deceives students with a misinterpretation of the nation.

Literature for Teaching:

An important reason for choosing multicultural children's literature is due its own questionable appropriateness. On one hand, many multicultural educators celebrate the presence of multicultural children's literature in schools. Bieger (1996) contends that multicultural literature "can develop and expand multicultural understandings that are common to all, by relating the things that make each cultural group special, and by exploring the effects of racism and poverty on the lives of ordinary individuals" (p. 309). Similarly, Norton (1990) argues that "multicultural literature is essential in the classroom because these materials meet the needs of students and help them grow in the understanding of themselves and others" (p. 28). Reed (d.n.k.) envisions literature as a means of attaining an anti-racist perspective. She notes that "literature, as an academic discipline and as an internal esthetic event, has a natural affinity for the goals of anti-racist education and can be used to prepare students for an anti-racist curriculum proper or as an integral part of that curriculum" (p. 12). In general, numerous educators claim that by using multicultural texts, students gain the opportunity to discuss such issues as: conflict, human rights, strangeness, and the Canadian identity. The stories become the lenses through which one can appreciate different perspectives by:

1) encouraging children to explore moral issues (Schwartz, 1995; Tappan & Brown, 1989)
2) providing a vehicle to explore differences and commonalities between co-citizens (Rakinski & Padak, 1990);
3) making the strange appear recognizable and human (Dowd, 1992);
4) sharpening students' peace making and critical thinking skills by illustrating examples of conflict resolution (Oster, 1989);
5) encouraging children to express their views risk-free by relating their feelings to text (Roney, 1986);
6) creating for children a forum to explore "real" world issues such as immigrant isolation and racism and its issues (MacPhee, 1997);
7) providing a means to explore wounds and heal emotionally injured children (Feuerverger, 1994);
8) and assisting "social development as children discover that all people are human beings to be considered as individuals, not stereotypes" (Norton, 1985, p. 103).

These collective accolades suggest that multicultural children's literature can help create a more inclusive and multicentric perspective of Canada by pushing the boundaries of who is a Canadian.

Yet the use of multicultural children's literature has also been viewed as problematic. Concerned educators have claimed that even well-intentioned literature can be used to promote stereotypes, sanction propaganda, vilify entire cultures and legitimize questionable claims. Dowd (1992) and Hamanaka's (d.n.k.) are two of several educators who focus on the problem of stereotyping in multicultural texts. Although their attention focuses on the status of multicultural books written on and by Asian and Native Americans, their points can be generalized to other cultures. Both are fairly comprehensive and provide discussions on the value of multicultural children's literature in fighting racism, challenging stereotypes, and familiarizing students to other cultures. However, both are mainly concerned about the stereotypes found in so-called multicultural books and call for more critical publishers. Their objection is not with the presence of multicultural literature but with some of the material that publishers claim to be part of the genre. The problem springs mainly from the treatment of minority issues. Instead of exploring issues such as power, privilege and conflict, they note that some multicultural children's literature causes students to perceive people as artifacts of the different cultures thus reducing human beings to exotic objects. They both express the fear that such texts may promote, rather than refute, stereotypes.

Probably due to her interracial background, Hamanaka (d.n.k.) discusses the need to depict minority children as a collection of identities and cultures rather than one-dimensional figures. Her article speaks to the complexity of the depiction of diversity by opening the door to a growing segment of our society – offspring of interracial relationships. While she acknowledges that the genre of multicultural literature is expanding, issues and characters related to interracial relationships are mostly absent. Her observation is testimony to the
intricacies of diversity and the importance of a true understanding rather than simple lip service to the issues.

Dowd's (1992) emphasis is on the publishing aspect of multicultural books. Although she admits that there are devoted publishers engaged in thoughtful reviews of multicultural texts, she also notes that many publishing companies mislabel their books as multicultural for various reasons including profit and miseducation. Dowd celebrates the genre's ability to "humanize what may at first seem strange (p. 220) but warns that texts with stereotypes will achieve the exact opposite effect. Her article concludes with a list of stereotypes about Asian and American Natives, organizations to contact for further information, and recommended books.

Ford (1994) offers a more thorough examination than Dowd on the responsibility of publishers in producing multicultural literature. He critically examines the role that publishers have played in the development of the multicultural genre. He begins by questioning the word "multicultural" and its various meanings to different publishers. Ford's argument is that some publishers are simply following a trend concerned only with supplying bookstores with anything that could be labeled multicultural. Consequently, attention is not given to such concerns as the role of the minority character or the authenticity of the illustrations. The asset of the article is the information provided on different publishing companies involved in multicultural children's literature.

Some of the problems collectively, identified by Ford (1994), Dowd (1992), and Hamanaka (d.n.k.) are:
1) depicting minorities in set roles such as the polite Asian or dancing Indian;
2) illustrating minorities with European features but with beige skin and Blacks with curly hair and one skin tone;
3) using only myths and fairy tales. Such stories imply that other cultures have no place in the modern North American society;
4) assigning minorities small roles in the story.
5) depicting only characters that represent one race and excluding those with multiracial backgrounds.

Models for Thought:

Bieger (1996), MacPhee (1997), Norton (1990), Raskinski & Padak (1990), Reed (d.k.n.), and Roney, (1986) all provide various models for utilizing multicultural children's literature to expose students to issues of racism and citizenship in a diverse society. Their
models are only a small representation of the numerous approaches used to integrate multicultural texts into the classroom.

Norton's (1990) model explains a five-step strategy that is mainly a historical review of a specific group. The approach begins with a broad awareness of folk tales and myths of one particular group (e.g. Native Americans), narrows itself to one sector of that group (e.g. Mi'kmaw), proceeds to autobiographies and biographies from an earlier time in history, continues with historical fiction, and then ends with a more contemporary look at the group.

Reed (d.n.k.), on the other hand, suggests an issue-approach structure where students use texts to discuss particular problems. Students are introduced to a dilemma or current concern, (e.g. child poverty), given different multicultural texts related to the topic, and then led to discussion based on what they have learned through the stories.

Roney (1986) recommends a more holistic response to the readings through the use of "literary webs" (p. 464). At the center is a concept such as "pluralist society;" students then list other related categories such as stereotypes, racism, language, equal representation, and so on. They begin by discussing a singular category and then move outwards into other areas. The texts are used not just to expose children to different cultures but also to evoke questions such as does the media promote stereotypical images? The concepts are connected together through a web fashion.

Bieger (1996), MacPhee (1997), and Raskinski & Padak (1990), use various versions of Banks' (1989) four-level approach to multicultural curriculum reform to support their various styles. In Banks' hierarchically-based curricular design, change begins with the inclusion of stories of various cultures' holidays and festivals. Next, students are introduced to themes reflective of other cultures yet still viewed through the mainstream eye. They then use texts that introduce them to multiple perspectives of one theme. This stage allows them to examine an issue from different cultures' various points of view. Finally, they learn to identify and address social problems that impede the opportunity to attain personal and group success.

The strategy of employing multicultural literature to bring an awareness of racial issues to mainly-White classrooms is the focus of MacPhee's (1997) study; the similarity to my study made her research of special interest to me. Her action-research project combined Banks' (1989) four-level model with Rosenblatt's (1978) reader-response theory. The reader-response philosophy suggests that students interpret texts through the experiences that they bring to the

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1 Banks' model (1989) is fully described in chapter 4.
stories. Their experiences may include memories of unfair treatment or their developed sense of right and wrong. Expecting her students to react to the multicultural texts from their experiences, MacPhee introduced them to texts relating both fictional and non-fictional accounts of racism. She then encouraged her readers to describe their feelings towards the racist events in the stories. She argues that the students relied on their human reaction to fairness, seeing many of the fictional victims of racism as being treated unfairly. She contends that the multicultural literature and the approach helped to bring her students to a new level of awareness by encouraging them to apply their notion of right and wrong to issues normally outside the realm of their experience.

While each of these articles was interesting, unresolved issues still remained. First, the authors fail to present evidence that the students were transformed by the reading experience. MacPhee does prove a level of the sensitivity from her students towards racism but it is undetermined if this response is due to prior knowledge or from interaction with the texts. Moreover, the texts that she utilized portray obvious infringements on justice, making it easy to identify the perpetrator and victim. This left me wondering about the complexity of the lessons and if students would be able to interpret racism in less obvious stories.

Secondly, some of the authors claim that multicultural literature will promote good citizenship (Rasinski & Padak, 1990, p.576). However, no one explains what that exactly means. There is an assumption that we all share the same notion of the good citizen. The unquestioned assumption presents the danger of confining the notion to particularities not approved or enjoyed by all members of society (for example, the belief in meritocracy).

Thirdly, the articles provided little attention to the problems or adverse situations that may arise while using the models. This could leave readers with the assumption that these models guarantee success. As described in chapter 6, my own experience with using multicultural literature is that the approach is neither easy nor foolproof. Suggestions to the otherwise diminish the complexity of the genre and leave uniformed teachers susceptible to a student backlash.

Literature for Transformation:

Feuerverger's (1994) "A Multicultural Literacy Intervention for Minority Language Students" is a powerful example of the essence of literature. Fusing her research data with her own personal voice, Feuerverger provides a moving story of how literature can be used as the basis for cross-cultural discovery and self-esteem. The study narrates a Toronto school's endeavor to create an instructive and empowering environment for its new immigrant and ESL
students. By using bilingual books (English and languages representative of the diverse student body), students were able to participate in reading activities, witness the validation of their culture and language, interact with the familiar in an unfamiliar world, and share their own stories with their new peers.

In one particularly poignant paragraph, Feuerverger connects her memories of being the new child at a school to the anxious feelings she imagines are experienced by the children. This memory, which many of us can relate to in some manner, provides one of the strongest testimony for the use of the texts—to provide a child with a voice to tell a story. The positive impact that the bilingual books had on the parents, students, teachers, and the general school environment is a powerful illustration of the bridges that literature can form in a diverse society.

Ada's (1988) "The Pajaro Valley Experience" also speaks to the transforming powers of children's literature. Unlike Feuerverger's participants who represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds, Ada's readers are predominately Hispanic from the Pajaro Valley School District. In a welcoming and safe school environment, Hispanic parents were invited to discuss books reflective of their culture and language. At home, the literature was shared between parents and their children. The project is a remarkable account of how literature was used to create a greater sense of self-worth within a minority community, while at the same time, enhancing the relationship between the community and the school. It is worth noting that many of these parents had extremely limited literacy skills; yet rather than become a hindrance, their limitations became points of departure from which they could grow. Like the participants in Feuerverger's (1994) study, the readers found their voice.

Sometimes books are used not just to teach literacy skills but political action as well. Such is the case in the Orava Project—a program in Slovakia which sought to teach democracy through the medium of literature (Temple, 1997). Attempting to introduce students to the new political system of democracy, various schools integrated literature from around the world with the hopes of introducing new ideas to the children. Students were exposed to situations unfamiliar to their world and then encouraged to discuss them. The point of the project was to develop critical thinking skills as well tolerance for others. Temple notes:

For democratic societies to flourish...citizens must learn to live their lives in ways that support democratic ideals. That means not just voting, but taking part in a web of relationships that are characterized by behaviours and attitudes such as self-reflection, tolerance for others, willingness to share power, critical thinking, decision making, taking responsibility for oneself, forming
one's own opinions, feeling connected to others and concerned about what happens to them, and making meaning from experience. (p. 438)

Temple's observation regarding a students' education to a democratic society is similar to Giroux's (1996) position of the responsibility of schools in teaching the democratic ideal:

At stake here is the refusal to grant public schooling a significant role in the ongoing process of educating people to be active and critical citizens capable of fighting for and reconstructing democratic public life.

The struggle over public schools cannot be separated from the social problems currently facing this society. These problems are not only political in nature but are pedagogical as well. That is, whenever power and knowledge come together, politics not only functions to position people differently with respect to the access of wealth and power, it also provides the conditions for the production and acquisition of learning. Put another way, it offers people opportunities to take up and reflect on the conditions that shape themselves and their relationship with others. (p. 296)

I found the Orava Project extremely interesting as it echoes my projects' impetus of opening students to new ideas. The democratic ideal that each individual has the right to representation and voice is the basic premise for my use of the multicultural texts. Like Temple's participants, my students were also introduced to a new political direction—the broadening of the Canadian identity.

Racial Awareness:

An assertion that I developed at the beginning of my research is that children have a sense of racial awareness and preference. As the following paragraphs suggest, there is an ample body of old and new research indicating that racial attitudes are learned early in life.

Racial Preference:

As early as 1939, Clark and Clark were conducting the now famous "doll experiments," which observed young children interacting with black and white dolls. Through a series of reports (1939, 1940, 1947, 1950), Clark and Clark determined that both Black and White children were not only aware of racial distinctions but demonstrated racial preference as well.

During the same time period of the Clarks, Goodman (1952) collected data on racial awareness. In an extensive study of 103 White and Black pre-school children and their families, Goodman found that participants as young as three were aware of racial differences and that 25% of the four-year-olds articulated entrenched race-related values. Moreover, she noted the Black children expressed denial and conflict about their race; some even stated a desire to be White. In contrast, the White students never expressed a desire to be Black.
Radke and Trager reenacted the doll experiment in 1972. Examining the racial views of children ranging from K-2, Radke and Trager instructed 52 Black and 152 White children to engage in prescribed tasks such as choosing clothing and housing for the black and white dolls. The researchers noted that the children commented on the colour difference between the dolls on a regular basis. Some of the White children used racial slurs when referring to the black dolls; furthermore, this increased with age. At each age level, both groups of children chose the poorer clothes and houses for the black dolls. The White children supported their decisions with stereotypical remarks such as "because it [the house] is dirty and all colored live dirty" (Radke & Trager, 1972, p. 64). Black children also noted poverty as the main reason for their choices. Finally, both groups of children demonstrated preference for their own race dolls.

Decades later, various studies still suggest that young children attach positive connotations to "Whiteness" in an Anglo-Saxon context, and negative connotations to the other. As early as primary school, children have been observed as demonstrating preference for one's own racial group (Crump, 1986; Milner, 1975). In 1995, Gopaul-McNicol, conducted a doll-type study with 302 preschool children living in the West Indies. The point of the study was to measure the long-lasting effects of colonialism. Her data illustrated that almost 72% of the children chose to play with a white doll. A preference she connected to the privilege and power enjoyed by the White race.

It should be noted that that doll experiment has come under criticism from various researchers. For example, Burnett and Sisson (1995) conducted similar tests and found that Black children preferred the black dolls and did not demonstrate the characteristics of White superiority as found in various studies by Clark & Clark. Holmes' (1995) How Young Children Perceive Race also suggests caution in regards to earlier studies of children and racism. He argues that many of the studies failed to "account for the richness of human behaviour that occurs among individuals, the non-verbal communication, and the social categories that are relevant to the children...the salience of 'race' in young children can only be fully understood by entering and fully understanding their social worlds" (p. 166).

Age and Racism:

Different studies provide varying perspectives on the relationship between age and racial awareness and preference. Evidence presented by Bigler and Liben (1993) and Katz and Zalk (1978) indicates that White children hold prejudicial views most strongly during kindergarten and that discriminatory feelings decline as the children age. Canadian-based studies with White children suggest similar findings (Aboud, 1993, 1988; Aboud & Doyle,
1995; Corenblum & Annis, 1987). Others studies suggest different ages for the climax of prejudicial beliefs. A study by Milner (1975) reported that between the ages of 4 and 7, children's negative stereotypes develop into greater antagonistic feelings towards minority children. However, after recording White Australian children's attitudes towards Aboriginal people, Black-Gutman and Hickson (1996) contended that the greatest amount of antagonism occurred amongst the eldest test group of 10-12 year olds. Allport, on the other hand, (1954) believed prejudice to exist in the domain of older teenagers and adults, arguing that racial intolerance crystallizes with age. Despite the lack of consensus regarding the age at which prejudicial beliefs form and peak, all researchers agreed that early anti-racist intervention presented the greatest opportunity to challenge prejudice.

Racism’s Tight Reign:

The general fortitude of racial biases has also been the focus of various studies. Radke-Yarrow's (1952) study of K-1 children and their parents found that several of the children espoused racial beliefs even when their parents did not. Milner's work (1975) suggests that not only do racial attitudes solidify with age but, as children grow older, they also become more proficient at accommodating racist beliefs. Milner reported that older children could express a dislike for a racial group even if they had friends within that group. The contradiction was justified by the belief that the friend in question was a positive exception to the group.

Is Seeing Liking?:

A strategy commonly regarded as successful in challenging racial views is increased intercultural contact. In 1978, Katz & Zalk tested the theory that increased contact results in decreased racial bias. They tested the impact of four strategies in prejudice reduction. I was most impressed with the fourth. In this strategy, Katz & Zalk taught African American and White children how to differentiate between different facial features of the other group. According to the researchers, their participants no longer felt that members of the other group all looked the same and prejudice amongst both groups was reduced. The most remarkable part of this study is that exposure occurred in increments of fifteen minutes, thus suggesting that great amounts of time are not necessary to fight prejudice. In reference to multicultural children's literature, the significant point is on the power of illustrations. If Katz & Zalk's study is accurate, then attention must be paid to the messages students gather from the illustrations of visible minorities.

In contrast, Kehoe and Mansfield's (1993) article "The Limitations of Multicultural Education And Anti-Racist Education" questions the impact of exposure on prejudice.
reduction. They highlight studies in which exposure to different minority groups actually increased prejudice. Kehoe (1993) refers to one study in particular which underlined the ability to hold dichotomous racial attitudes. Working with high school students, the researcher versed his participants on various human rights principals. After it was apparent that they understood the rights, students were asked to respond to the principals in reference to both a majority and minority context. Results indicated that students were less likely to advocate a universal right, such as the freedom of religion, when applied to a minority or First Nations person. Similar findings are underlined in studies by Aboud (1999). Aboud’s recent work on introducing children from predominately-White places to multicultural literature indicates that children with strong prejudicial beliefs prior to the interaction with the texts, either maintained or increased their prejudicial views.

Aboud (1999) and Kehoe and Mansfield (1993) identify the delivery of the intercultural information as the underlining problem. They note that the point is not to simply familiarize children with people of different skin colour or their song and dance but to also provide multi-identification cues so that the people appear human rather than cardboard stereotypes. This reasoning is in line with the disapproval articulated by Ford (1994), Dowd, (1992) and Hamanaka (d.n.k.) with the multicultural texts that depict stereotypical images.

**Studies in White Places:**

British studies situated in predominately-white places that should be highlighted include those by these Tomlinson (1990), whom I refer to in chapter 1, Troyna and Hatcher (1992), Carrington and Short (1993) and Gillborn (1996). Troyna and Hatcher’s (1992) extensive study on children educated in predominately-White schools also demonstrates the pervasive presence of racism in their lives. After observing and interviewing 10 and 11 year-olds from three mainly-White British primary schools, they concluded that race and racism were significant factors in their participants' lives. Troyna and Hatcher’s participants engaged in various acts of racism, the most overt being name-calling, with little remorse. The researchers found that some participant rationalized the slurs based on other socially undesirable characteristics (for example, it is acceptable to make racial slurs against someone who is obese).

Carrington and Short’s (1993) work examines the ethical issues of interviewing White children on issues related to race and racism. Their greatest concern seemed to be the dilemma of how to respond when a participant (in this case a young White child) makes an overtly racist
comment. Their insights, such as the dangers of leading the participant or impressing one’s own views on the participant, influenced my own research design.

Gillborn (1996) also studied British White students' reactions to multicultural education and anti-racist initiatives. His suggestion for positive change involved the conceptualization of White as a race. This realization would shift whiteness from the location of the norm to that of one among many other races. I found Gillborn’s assertion compelling as I also attempted to engage my White participants in the consideration that they belong to a particular race accompanied by its own set of values, beliefs, and perspectives.

Amidst the American body of research, I found the work of Patricia Ramsey (1991; 1995) the most interesting. Ramsey’s research tests the contention that "White children in segregated settings have been found to be more biased against African-Americans than are their peers in integrated settings" (1991, p. 29). After showing ninety-three preschool children growing up in a mainly-White community photographs of unfamiliar Asian-American, African-American, and European-American children, Ramsey reported:

Because these subjects live in an all-White community and had virtually no previous contact with either African-American or Asian-American children, they were expected to show a strong preference for same-race as well as same-sex children. Congruent with this prediction, children made more positive comments about SR [same race] peers than DR [different race] peers in the open-ended task. (1991, p. 33)

Her conclusion contended that “despite the lack of direct cross-racial contact, the children in this all-White community noticed racial differences” (1991, p. 34). She also found that the youngest of her White participants expressed the most obvious racial preferences.

In another study on all-White neighbourhoods, Ramsey (1995) examined children’s self-perceptions regarding race. Her findings suggested that children's concepts of their race were related not only to their position as a majority or minority group within their community but also to the amount of contact that they have with other races.

The process of the literature review proved itself to be an interesting exercise. Although, I learned a lot about what is known in the areas of identity, citizenship, schooling and multicultural literature, I gained a greater appreciation of how much information is either disputed or not known at all. The lack of studies in mainly-White places, especially Canada, further solidified my desire to pursue this area of interest.
CHAPTER III – LOCATING VARIOUS PATHS:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference. (Frost, 1993)

Every learning journey is an expedition filled with decisions presenting twists and turns. Every learning journey is a unique adventure situated in a moment of time. Even if it were possible to return to the beginning and take on the entire pilgrimage again, time and experience would have changed the paths. Some would be broadened by new research that has plowed its way through; others would be weeded over, forgotten by those who have chosen other paths of interest. The story told is just a pause in the history that breathes through the location. Thus, "the ethnographic present never remains as it is described, nor does the description of the current times fully capture the influences and forces of history on the present (Heath, 1983, p. 9). Selecting a topic is like choosing a particular road for the journey. By electing to situate a multicultural study in a predominately-White area, I decided upon a road less traveled. This particular road brings about a particular adventure and that creates a particular story. A different road, a different adventure, a different story – this is just one story.

Placing Myself on the Road:

The important thing is to realize that no social vision is ever definitive, there is always more outside it. The circle of stories is there to keep us continually expanding and reshaping that vision. (Frye, 1972, p. 3)²

Like our research interest, our choice of methodology is a reflection of who we are. It is part of the story that we tell. Given this, I felt that a discussion on methodology should begin with who I am:

Doing this research has been like moving backwards and forwards at the same time. I keep thinking back to when I was in school and how I thought my White classmates saw me. At the same time, here I am twenty years later standing on the other side of the mirror.

Locating myself as a researcher, I can see that there has been a lot of tension in my life – tensions between my different sub-identities as a female, student, teacher, East Indian, and Canadian. These sub-identities have taken on molecule-type qualities; they are all moving around inside of me; some bind with others, some repel others. Within this constant state of flux, different aspects of my identity come out at different times.

Although I was born in England, I have spent most of my life thus far living in different parts of the Maritimes. The East-Indian community was never large, consisting of about thirty families in the area I grew up in. However, this

² Frye is a fellow Maritimer.
small group made up the majority of my parents' social circle. Most of the Indians living in the area were either professionals, such as doctors or professors, or owned profitable businesses; my parents belonged to the latter group. So we lived economically-privileged lives in a place that denied us the greatest privilege of all—to be accepted as belonging.

How we came to live in Canada is a story in itself. My father arrived from England in 1968 on a special program offering Canadian immigration and university tuition to foreigners willing to enter the teaching profession. His first taste of Canada was Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. During this time, my mother and I stayed in England. I have no memory of this but I imagine it was quite hard for the two of them.

My father is no stranger to upheaval. His family had to leave their home after India's partition; they had the misfortune of living in the part that became Pakistan. In the midst of a civil war atmosphere, my father and his family left their belongings and lifestyle behind and fled to safety in India. Even with this experience, my father found the university experience difficult. He has told me that although he had a sister and brother-in-law close by, the year was incredibly lonely for him. It took him a long time to understand the culture and he spent a lot of time sick because the food was so different. I often think about this when I meet visa students. I admire them for their sense of adventure and strength in the same way that I admire my father.

The teacher-recruitment program was mainly aimed at foreigners. However, programs also existed for Canadian-born individuals wishing to enter the education field. Needless to say, the teacher pool was soon flooded. Cutbacks occurred and many teachers, coincidentally all of the new non-White ones, lost their jobs. A law suit ensued but the laid-off teachers lost. Holding on to their immigration, my parents decided to become self-employed and obtain some control over their future. Their plan involved staying in the Maritimes.

I'm sure my outlook would have been different if I had grown up in Toronto, like my cousins who follow the Hindu faith, marry other East Indians, and speak Punjabi. Based on advice given to them by my grade 1 teacher, my parents chose to speak only English because they wanted us to be "accent free." Furthermore, the Indian community was so small in the Maritimes that it was difficult to keep one's heritage language. They did try to maintain religious ties but that was hard when the nearest temple was 300 km away.

Although I lived in a predominately-White location, I was never teased because of my race; I have a theory as to why. I was overweight as a child and was called a lot of fat names. I think children pick their evils and my weight was a safer issue for discrimination. My sisters have had different experiences. My youngest sister, who is still in middle school, recently told me that she wished she lived in Toronto. When I asked her why, she told me that it would be nice to have other Indian children in her class. I understand why she feels this way. In her short school career, classmates have teased her because of her brown skin. It is in a school similar to hers that I have situated my research.

I spent a lot of time trying to be Canadian and my parents spent even more time trying to suppress this desire. My parents continually told my siblings and I that we would never be fully accepted as Canadians and that it wasn't that great of a goal to attain in the first place. In their view, Canadians were disrespectful, lazy and spoiled. Whenever one of us did something that
upset our parents, they would tell us to stop acting Canadian. I never did. As far as I was concerned, I had to make a choice between being Canadian or East Indian. Aligning myself with one identity meant precluding the other. For me the choice was easy. I wanted nothing to do with my ethnic background; it was a thing of the past. This feeling changed as I became older and surer of myself. Now, I feel myself constantly juggling two cultures rather than denying one.

Juggling cultures has been very much a part of my story as an educator and researcher. I began my teaching career at a First Nations school on a Maritime Mi’kmaw reservation. I was constantly trying to differentiate between what the students needed and what I thought they needed. Later, as a doctoral student living in Toronto, I was suddenly immersed in a large East-Indian community that had never been part of my experience. Interacting with people who shared my cultural background but not my assimilation experience was an eye-opener. Upon returning to my home in the Maritimes, I was the only Anglophone working among a Francophone staff. These are just some experiences of differences that I carry on my research journey.

Returning home was a decision I made early in my doctoral career. Reading and listening about multicultural research and minority experiences, I realized that my experiences were nowhere to be found. Most of the research occurred in areas of apparent visible diversity. I did not see my community as disempowered nor did I feel disadvantaged at school. Of course both conditions existed in subtleties that I did not detect; these I discovered later once I returned home and looked at my world with new eyes. Nevertheless, I was struck by the lack of research that spoke to my reality of growing up in a predominately-White place. This was the topic that I wanted to explore. (Journal entry, January 15, 2000)

Establishing a Path:

I first entered Sara’s grade 4/5 classroom in November, 1997. Prior to this, Sara and I had met on several occasions to discuss my general research interests as well as my specific plan of study in her classroom. Sara and I had already worked on a team together in the past and thus already enjoyed a professional relationship. This relationship became a vital part of my data collection. For example, if I felt uncomfortable with the way Sara had reacted to a particular issue on diversity, rather than draw my own conclusions, I felt comfortable to question, even challenge, her behaviour. As she too felt safe to express herself, her responses were honest and unguarded. Her perspectives often held a distinct interpretation of my data, compelling me to reexamine my findings with different eyes.

For approximately two months, until the beginning of Christmas break, 1997, I simply observed the class. My field notes include impressions, classroom descriptions, notable events,
and a review of the range of texts available in the classroom and school library. Sara explained my presence to her students by informing them that I was doing a reading study for my doctoral thesis. Only once during this time did I participate in a class discussion. During a class talk on different religious holidays, Sara asked me to explain the Hindu festival of Divali. No reference was made to my research.

In January 1998, I began formal interactions with the students. The first half of the study was directed towards determining what these students deemed as “Canadian.” My hope was to achieve a holistic impression by collecting both superficial and profound expressions of identity. In other words, I attempted to gauge students’ opinions of what Canadians look and sound like as well as what they value and believe.

Information was acquired through both quantitative and qualitative means. Most of the classroom tasks were quantitative in origin but later expanded to include qualitative data. For example, students were asked to draw a Canadian and an immigrant. Statistical data was then recorded on various indicators such as how many students coloured their Canadian image with a dark crayon. Later, some students were interviewed regarding their drawings so that I could be assured of the reasoning behind their choices. Other collection tools were more qualitative in nature. These included focus group interviews, class discussions, and class projects related to my study. My data collection tools and activities are described in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Acquiring my participants’ versions of the Canadian took approximately seven weeks, until March Break. After a short absence, I began the process of introducing my participants to my multicultural Canadian text set. I wanted the students’ interactions with the texts to be a comfortable and self-initiated process, rather than a forced one. I accomplished this by usurping Sara’s display table of books. Every week, Sara would place a particular selection of books on the table. Usually the books represented an overall theme such as the weather or the Olympics. Students were encouraged, but never forced, to borrow these books for the daily silent reading period. At the end of the week, Sara’s books were returned to her bookshelves and new books were placed on the table. I borrowed this process using my own books. To make the transition between her books and mine smoothly, I asked Sara to set up the table for the first week. In the following weeks, we prepared the table together until eventually, I took over the responsibility for the display.

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3 The text review proved quite interesting in that Sara had only two books that could only remotely be considered multicultural. The library did not fare much better.
Sara not only encouraged my books for the silent reading period but also often used them herself during the teacher-led reading period. During this time, Sara would read to the students and then encourage a class discussion on any of its themes. Sometimes, very little was said about the book; at other times, long conversations ensued. For the next four months, either Sara or myself read to the class everyday. At least twice a week, we chose a book from my text set. At first, I pre-selected my own book, having a planned discussion in mind. However, students soon began requesting stories while avoiding others. Consequently, our follow-up talks became less directed and more spontaneous.

After only a few post-book discussions, it became apparent that the students were willing to discuss the diversity themes of some books but not of others. This preferential treatment eventually helped me to create a hypothesis regarding different levels of dialoguing within issues of racism and privilege. This theory is discussed in chapter 6.

Running concurrently with my classroom visits were meetings with my critical reading group, a team consisting of four grade 4 students. Working within this small group, I was able to investigate questions to an extent not possible in the large class setting. The difference in direction taken by this group provided a revealing look at the impact of various teaching methodologies as well as the possibilities in the use of multicultural literature. These findings are also discussed in chapter 6.

I was a permanent fixture in the classroom until the end of the school year. I returned in October of 1998. Again Sara was teaching a grade 4/5 split. Most of her previous grade 4 students had remained with her and constituted her grade 5 group. A new group of grade 4 students had been added to her class. Consequently, I was in the fortunate position of having a built-in control group, a group of grade 4s that had not been exposed to the multicultural literature. I reenacted several of the data-collecting tasks that I had used the year before and explored the difference between the new grade 4 students, the previous grade 4 students (now grade 5) and my critical reading group. This final process provides the structure for chapter 7.

Methodology – The Road Taken:

In describing the setting of his ethnographic novel, Cannery Row, John Steinbeck (1945) notes that:

Its inhabitants are, as the man once said, “whores, pimps, gamblers, and sons of bitches,” ... Had the man looked through another peephole he might have said, “saints and angels and martyrs and holy men,” and he would have meant the same thing. (p. 5)
Steinbeck's (1945) observation that the assumptions we make depend on our perspective is as pertinent to a researcher's approach as it is to the development of his novel. Every approach to research is a peephole through which we experience a certain periphery of vision. Each vision is attached to its own set of assumptions, values, and beliefs. Understanding which peephole we have chosen is fundamental to the research process. Recognizing that we all look through different peepholes is equally vital because it allows for the possibility that "facts can be understood differently; they can add up to different answers depending on how they are understood" (Lisle, 1989, p. 50).

My data is mainly interpreted from a qualitative peephole within the perspective of a critical ethnography. I have settled upon this particular methodology as it is a means of gathering data from the viewpoints existing within the group studied (Thomas, 1993; Anderson, 1989; Simon & Dippo, 1986) and focuses on "the study of the culture of a bounded group" (Jacob, 1987, p. 12). Furthermore, this approach explores identity formation through the examination of the "dialectical relationship between the social structure constraints on human actors and the relative autonomy of human agency" (Anderson, 1989, p. 249). Such constraints include social roles which are perceived as embodying negotiated meanings within the perimeters of power binds including those of racism, gender, and classism (Thomas, 1993). A critical ethnography within a school context questions the role of the curriculum in the reproduction of social and cultural prejudices necessary for the predisposition towards particular accepted norms (Anderson, 1989). In reference to this study, the critical aspect appears in the discussion of literature as a force in creating and sustaining a national identity. This study asks, what potential does multicultural children's literature have as a tool to critically examine our notion of social identities such as the national citizen?

Defending Methodology Choice:

It is clear that the qualitative inquiry paradigm is questioned by those more comfortable with a quantitative approach. Critics have perceived the model to exist within a short history (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990) that has "come into vogue" (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 2). While quantitative inquiry is assumed to be scientific, objective, and of high validity, qualitative inquiry is reputed to be unscientific, subjective, and of dubious validity (Smith, 1983). Rather than engage in the qualitative vs. quantitative debate, I believe a better approach is advocated in Rist's (1990) contention that "the issue is not research strategies, per se. Rather, the adherence to one paradigm as opposed to another predisposes one to view the world and the events within it in profoundly different ways" (p. 83). Again, we are back to the question of peepholes.
Regardless of which peephole a researcher decides upon, there are always questions surrounding issues of researcher bias and data validity. Given this, I recognize that within the field of ethnography, a "serious methodological challenge has been the 'validity issue'" (Anderson, 1989, p. 252) and that I must take some time to address this subject.

Qualitative researchers have reacted differently to this issue. Lincoln and Guba (1985), for example, provide alternatives for the positivistic terminology. They maintain the need to establish the "truth value" of a study – its applicability, consistency, and neutrality, but contend that the constructs of the conventional positivist paradigm are unsuitable for qualitative inquiry. They propose four alternative constructs which reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm: "credibility," "transferability," "dependability," and "confirmability" (p. 12). Eisner (1991) also acknowledges the need for validity and proposes the criteria of "structural corroboration," "consensual validation," and "referential adequacy" (p. 110) as components for challenging arguments against the lack of validity.

Heap (1993), on the other hand, accuses qualitative researchers who attempt to satisfy the quantitative definition of scientific of dancing "to the tune of the empiricist piper" (p. 275). While simply supporting Heap's stance would have made the validity issue less contentious, I was not comfortable with deflating the need for assuring validity. Instead, I felt compelled to address this issue in reference to my topic of study.

Getting Somewhere with Validity:

One of the strongest accusations undermining the credibility of qualitative data is that researchers accept all information as valid data. Eisner (1991) identifies this charge as the "anything goes" criticism (p. 114). As I began to unravel the validity issue in regards to my own research, I came to the realization that the anything goes accusation does not just refer to data but to the entire research exercise as well. In other words, it is important to address validity in referent to topic choice as well as to the results.

Is the Topic Valid?:

I will speak to the question of validity of topic choice first. Eisner (1991) argues that "there are multiple ways in which the world can be known" (p. 7). In reference to research value, Eisner (1991) maintains that the final data must have integrity and "contribute to the enhancement of the educational process and through it to the educational enhancement of students" (p. 114). The question I then needed to consider was, does my research, and the means by which I conduct it, demonstrate a positive contribution to multicultural education and an enhancement to my participants' lives?
As I have repeatedly noted, the small body of multicultural research situated in
predominately-White locations has revealed a lack of understanding of an environment, which
demographically, still represents a large part of our nation. Of the literature that does exist
(Aboud, 1999; MacPhee, 1997; Ramsey, 1991, 1995) there is a consensus that greater
knowledge regarding such areas is urgent. Engaging in research that highlights this absence
while providing some information to address this gap is a proactive move to understanding
some of Canada's future citizens.

The reasons for this urgency are numerous. From an economical perspective, areas
wishing to prosper in the age of globalization must ensure that their neighbourhoods welcome
diversity. In the Maritimes, enticing and keeping immigrants is a challenge. If the out
migration (including both immigrants and Canadian citizens) rate continues at its current level,
in ten years, the Maritimes will have a dying population with zero growth (Dyer, 2000). Part of
the solution rests with devising policies and strategies for inviting and retaining new-comers to
the area. A World of Diversity (2000), a recent Atlantic conference, presented workshops by
representatives from various sectors of society (for example, Eric Claus, CEO of Co-Op
Atlantic, John Savage, former Premier of Nova Scotia, and John Miller, past director of the
School of Journalism, Ryerson), all of whom articulated a need to understand how diversity
works in predominately-White places such as the Maritimes.

Involved in preparing the Maritimes for diversity is the process of educating its citizens
on the benefits of pluralism. As Howard (1993) contends, such a procedure involves educating
Whites on the changing world. While Howard refers to American society, his observations are
equally accurate for Canadians:

Too many segments of our white American population remain
committed to their position of dominance; they are willing to defend it and
legitimize it, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that our world is
rapidly changing. Taken as a whole, these realities strongly suggest that a
peaceful transition to a new kind of America, in which no ethnic or cultural
group is in a dominant position, will require considerable change in education
and deep psychological changes for many white Americans.

...Many white Americans feel threatened by the changes that are
coming. One of our responsibilities, therefore, is to help them understand that
our nation is in a time of necessary transition. This is part of the honesty we are
trying to address. (p. 37 & 39).

Because, as McIntosh (1990) notes, many Whites are unaware of their privileges, it is
reasonable to assume that information revealing this reality, and its impact on other races, will
be met with resistance, confusion and guilt. Therefore, it is imperative to gather information
on the best means to acclimatize those uniformed of Canada’s pluralism to their changing environment. In other words, this thesis is not just about revealing to my participants, the type of country they live in but also the type of environment their own immediate world has the potential to become.

My personal experience as a visible minority living in a mainly-White setting further solidifies my belief in the justification and value of this study. I am not alone in this belief. Since there is not a lot of research on this issue in the Maritimes, I have had to rely a lot on personal testimonies for justification. While numerous minorities living in the area supplied me with stories of discrimination, one particular incident stood out. The following is a letter written by an employee of the Department of Canadian Heritage, the department responsible for dealing with racism and social cohesion in Canada. The author, who at the time of this letter was new to the Maritimes, noted that she was constantly amazed at the lack of knowledge that local citizens demonstrated on diversity. Having grown up in Western Canada, she was not used to seeing the world through the Maritime peephole. With her permission, I have included one of her responses to this peephole:

Racism 101

Yesterday, dear colleagues, I had an extraordinary encounter in this kitchen with a person who works on this floor. She asked me whether she might have spotted me – she was not very sure – at Chapters a few days before. She then innocently said that she had tremendous difficulty in distinguishing the features of non-white people (I am non-white). I must have looked blankly at her, because unfortunately she felt the need to explain.

“ ‘I mean, if you see a hundred Chinese people, they all look the same. Do you have this problem?’”

Resisting the desire to fling my milk at her, I replied, “no.”

“I wonder why I have his problem,” she chirped.

“You should get out more, and travel.” I said trying not to laugh. “And I would advise you not to make remarks like these to non-white people as they are in extremely bad taste.”

The poor woman still had difficulty grasping my point and mused on about not being a racist, happily oblivious to the fact that she simply makes a habit of not looking carefully at persons who are not of her race.

I am informing you of this incident in order to protect myself from any further examples of this kind of idiocy. If you are the aforementioned variety of idiot, at least have the grace to keep your mouth shut. Since the vast majority of you are not, please forgive this trespass on your time. (Sanyal, 2000)

Ironically, the person to whom Ms. Sanyal referred, works in the translation sector of Canadian Heritage. Consequently, she is continually translating documents on diversity issues such as racism, bilingualism, multiculturalism, immigration and Canadian identity. Yet any lessons
learned from her readings cannot be discerned in her comments. This exchange not only provides affirmation for the need for multicultural research in White areas but also makes a comment on one of my thesis questions – the transition from reading to learning. This woman’s remarks demonstrate the possibility of engaging in texts without divining any critical thought from the words. Is it possible that students who read multicultural children’s literature with the same uncritical approach also fail to detect its lessons?

Some may find Sanyal’s letter confrontational and bitter. I certainly had these feelings when I first read it. However, the episode described above was one of many experienced by Sanyal. As she commented to me, “I just had enough” (Interview, February 16, 2000). Her experiences in the Maritimes are similar to stories told in a study about visible minority and Aboriginal youth experiences of racism in New Brunswick (Baker & Varma, 1999). In a repeated refrain of racism, participants of the study reported being followed in malls, assaulted by racial slurs, questioned by police, and physically attacked in schools and other public venues. Two sisters recalled being trapped in their home while a car of skinheads parked in front of their house. These experiences, as well as numerous others that I do not have the space to record, demonstrate a valid need for multicultural research in predominately-White locations.

However, personal anecdotes are not enough; I also needed to situate my research into a framework that defends the validity of the research itself. To accomplish this, I chose a framework suggested by Conle (1999). Conle provides an alternative for the positivistic terminology with four constructs that reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm. These constructs are: “truth claims,” “rightness or social acceptability,” “assumption of truth,” and “comprehensibility” (p. 9).

“Truth claims,” Conle (1999, p. 9) explains, are the assertions put forth by the researcher regarding the topic: “they check out descriptive statements about events in a plot line, or they ascertain certain facts or characteristics of people or settings. They relate to something in the objective world and establish the existence of states of affairs” (p. 9). This construct connects personal memory with impersonal evidence, such as dates and places. For my thesis, truth claims, such as the statistical data that depicts the Maritimes as a predominately-White location, help to support my recollections of why I would have felt different growing as well as my desire to research my chosen subject.

The appropriateness of a topic speaks to its “social acceptability” (Conle, 1999, p. 9) of the topic. I have often been questioned regarding my choice of participants and topic. People
wonder why I have decided upon White students as my participants. They ask why am I not working with minority students growing up in predominately-White areas? Why am I focusing my research on an ethnic group that already holds a dominant spot in the society's perspective? Questions of why I am studying multicultural education in a place with so little visible diversity have also surfaced. More than once, I have had to defend the acceptability of giving attention to my selected location and participants. The questions are valid and need to be addressed. I hope my answers help to explain my choices.

From the beginning of conceptualizing my thesis work, I have wanted to work with White students. Simply put, I know how I felt growing up. Of course, reflection of one's past never ends but rather continues into the future; so I could have still explored the life of minority students. In a strange way, I am writing about minority children. The minority groups can be counted and reduced to numbers. But what does that mean? What does that tell us? That they are small in number, that is all. However, by relating how White the environment is in the Maritimes, and how this is all the children experience, then one gets a sense of how the non-white child must feel alone in this White world. Rather than explore the disadvantaged group, I have decided to talk to the advantaged and study the messages they carry that cause the disadvantaged to feel excluded. Although my participants and I represent different realities, I feel that we are involved in the similar mission of trying to understand how each one of us fits into a larger identity. Their notions of Canadian are not divorced from mine. As David Booth notes, "We look for our own stories in the stories of others" (cited in Bryce, 1997, cover). In the next pages, the Canadian story, as constructed by my participants, is told. Their idea of what is Canadian and who fits the description informs my own story of a visible minority living in the Maritimes. My personal story of exclusion is their story of selection.

Choosing the Maritimes as my research site is also about understanding a story from a different perspective. Proust once said that "discoveries do not consist of finding new directions but rather seeing old ideas with different eyes." His words articulate my research. Rather than going somewhere new, I have returned home. Through my eyes, I relate visions of Canada as conceived by my White participants who now stand in some of the spaces I once occupied.

Conle's third construct is the "assumption of truth," (p. 9), a characteristic taken on by the audience. This is a difficult concept to secure for, as Conle notes, the reader must "assume that I am truthful" (p. 9). Conle argues that the assumption can be verified through the consistency of the researcher's words. She suggests looking for contradictions in the researcher's statements, which may demonstrate a disguising of true feelings or even a general
uncertainty brought on by personal emotions and memories. Conle also asks for "more narrative" (p. 10) to provide the reader with as much detail as possible. I have tried to satisfy this condition through several means. First, I have supplied extensive interview excerpts of both Sara and her students' thoughts. Secondly, I have provided as much description of the city, school and classroom as I possibly can without compromising the participants' confidentiality rights. Thirdly, a section of media reports has been included to substantiate my description of the location's social environment and perspectives on difference (Appendix A). This section includes letters to the editors as well as major newspaper stories which, in most probability, my participants would have heard about either at home or at school. Finally, I have tried to be extremely honest regarding my feelings, both about the data I have collected and my personal attitudes and beliefs. My hope is that all of this will help verify a sense of truth to my study.

Although not mentioned by Conle, I believe that there is another litmus test for truthfulness – the sensation of words. There is a passion that emanates from certain words and phrases that represent personal conviction and connection. A reader simply has to compare an assigned essay written by a disinterested student to the poems that are scribed in the journals of many a teenager to understand the feelings of words. Technically, the essay may be better written, grammatically correct, and balanced. In contrast, the poem may be disjointed, spontaneous, and chaotic. Yet which represents a clearer vision of the writer? Certainly, the researcher's claim of sincerity can always be questioned; so the greatest defense is to tell one's story as passionately as possible. Is there any doubt that Sanyal (2000) was being truthful in her letter? Throughout this thesis, I tell my story. By explaining who I am, what inspires me and what troubles me, with as much honesty as possible, it is my hope that the reader will accept the validity of my topic.

The final test is very clear – "comprehensibility" (Conle, 1999; p. 10); does the topic make sense? Is it rational to study White children's negotiation of diversity when they live in a predominately-White setting? This construct is just another way of asking if the topic holds validity as a research issue. According to different educators, multicultural organizations, minority groups (see chapter 1), and my own personal feelings, the answer is yes. The responsibility of the researcher is to provide enough material and evidence so that the reader can comprehend the reason for the study as well as the data derived from the exercise.
By applying my topic to Conle’s framework, I was able to establish a sense of validity in regards to my topic. The next step was to ensure that my data and conclusions also reflected a sense of validity.

**Data Validity and Locating the Researcher:**

Embedded in the question of validity is the issue of the researcher bias, defined in the research world as “subjectivity.” The quantitative assumption of pristine objectivity is predicated on the belief of neutrality. In contrast, qualitative researchers acknowledge that they are never completely objective. Each study resonates with personal choices and reveals a subtext of cultural and historical contexts. It is reflective of epistemological and ontological assumptions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) which are influenced by ethnicity, class, gender and age (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). The fundamental question, the blueprint of the study, the technique for collecting data, and the delivery of the reported data all define a particular predilection of the researcher (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994) and represent a collection of experiences, values and intentions (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Essentially, qualitative researchers challenge the belief that subjectivity can have a negative influence on a study by contending that we learn from acknowledging our sense of self. Wolcott (1990), for example, frames subjectivity as a means of discovering new possibilities for one’s research. Rather than suppressing personal feelings, the researcher is encouraged to use them as part of the inquiry.

As I have noted, my own personal experience is one of the brushes with which I paint my research portrait. At first, I was quite concerned with the possibility that my own subjectivity might highly influence my data collection. My own experiences as being treated as different by my elementary peers would certainly have some impact on how I viewed my White participants. Consequently, I was tempted to “adopt the role of the observer of an independently existing reality” (Smith, 1983, p. 7). However, I soon realized the futility and deception of this endeavor. To be truthful to both myself and my research, I had to recognize that “conducting curriculum inquiry from a humanistic perspective...necessitates that knowledge become situated, probably historically and socially located, and problematic, conditional, and nonabsolutist...” (Lincoln, 1992, p. 80). Such an imperative, insists that researchers come to terms with their own feelings while embarking on a research journey.

My challenge became not so much a matter of objectivity but rather one of “disciplined subjectivity” (Erickson, 1984, p. 61). While keeping in mind that personal experience has value, I continually pulled back in order to get a broader view of the situation. I attempted to
reach and maintain a sense of balance between valuing my personal experiences and "taming subjectivity" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 20).

There were times that this balance felt threatened. Sometimes, I experienced the need to overtly and directly express my voice and provide my impressions. I struggled with this dilemma until Bill Schubert (1999) introduced me to the notion of "intellectual conversation." This, he explained, is the process through which we reason out why we have chosen our particular topic of interest. He also noted that this process is especially informative when the topic does not have an extensive body of literature for support, as was the case of my research subject-matter. The dialogue is a means by which I could acknowledge my "conceptual baggage...a record of [my] thoughts and ideas about the research process. ...A process by which [I] could state [my] personal assumptions about the topic..." (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 49).

James Banks (1998) also underlines the importance of acknowledging one's personal history in his discussion on the implications for researchers of multicultural education. Believing "that the biographical journeys of researchers take the time to understand their personal history and the role it plays in directing their attention, Banks (1998) notes:

We also need to better understand and to make explicit the biographical journeys and values of researchers so that we can more closely approach the aim of objectivity in social science and educational research; objectivity should remain an important goal in the human sciences. It is an ideal toward which we should continue to strive, although it will always remain elusive. Making the values of researchers explicit will contribute to the attainment of...strong objectivity. ...Research is always and by logic necessity based on moral and political valuations, and the researcher should be obliged to account for them explicitly. (Banks, 1998, p. 6)

In other words, it is imperative that my audience and I accept that all knowledge is a perspective, rooted in both personal experience and conviction. My desire to explore White children's negotiations of diversity within their ideas of Canadian identity not only stemmed from my childhood experiences but also in my personal conviction to promote an inclusive nation.

Included in Banks' (1998) discussion on multicultural researchers is "a typology of cross-cultural researchers" (p. 7-8). The typology is designed to help researchers locate themselves within a research context and develop a sense of where their particular values and expectations are situated in reference to the researched community. His typology consists of four types of cross-cultural researchers:
The indigenous-insider: This individual endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it.

The indigenous-outsider: This individual was socialized within his or her indigenous community but has experienced high levels of desocialization and cultural assimilation into an outside or oppositional culture or community. The values, beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge of this individual are indistinguishable from those of an outside culture or community. This individual is not only regarded as an outsider by indigenous members of the cultural community but also is considered to have betrayed the indigenous community and “sold out” to the outside community. The indigenous-outside is...viewed as legitimate by the mainstream but not by the indigenous community.

The external-insider: This individual was socialized within another culture and acquires its beliefs, values, behaviors, attitudes and knowledge. However, because of his or her unique experiences, the individual rejects many of the values, beliefs, and knowledge claims within his or her indigenous community and endorses those of the studied community. The external-insider is viewed by the new community as an “adopted” insider.

The external-outsider: The external outsider is socialized within a community different from the one in which he or she is doing research. The external-outsider has a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the community he or she is studying and consequently often misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviors within the studied community. (p. 8)

While Banks' (1998) does note that “depending on the situations and contexts, we are all both insiders and outsiders...[and] a researcher’s insider-outsider status may change over the course of a lifetime” (p. 7), I had trouble situating myself within any of the locations. Because of the emphasis on assimilation into an outside community, I originally perceived myself to by an indigenous-outsider. Although I am not part of the White Anglo-Saxon community, I not only am familiar with, but also endorse, many of the groups’ values and beliefs. However, it would be false to say that my own community considers me with contempt or views me as a sell out. Rather, there is a strength in belonging to my own community, which I bring into my research location. Similarly, I neither subscribe to nor support all of the mainstream community’s values and beliefs making it improbable that I am an indigenous-insider. Given my perplexity, I decided to create another category, which I call the juggling insider-outsider. This individual is highly familiar with the outside culture (the one being studied), having lived within the community for an extended period of time. At the same time,
the researcher has managed to maintain enough of his or her indigenous community's values and beliefs to maintain a sense of belonging. The result is a juggling affect where the researcher has to continually decide whether to evoke the values of the community being studied or those of his or her own indigenous community. For example, the community to which I see my first identification, the Indo-Canadian community, frequently values the good of the group over that of the individual. However, Sara's classroom operated mainly on an individualist basis; group work was a rare occurrence and individuals were responsible for themselves. As an outsider, it could be reasoned that I would have trouble understanding the emphasis on the individual. But I did not. Because I have been raised in the outside community, I recognize this value and am able to relate to it in a particular context. I think this is an important researcher type to recognize as there are numerous researchers who are from a minority group yet are familiar enough with the mainstream community that they appear to have little problem entering the situation (for example, Delpit, Feuerverger, and Neito).

Does the Data Tell A Story?

Even once subjectivity is tamed and researchers have located themselves and their values, there is still the chance that the data is flawed. Eisner (1991) contends that the best way to ensure that data is significant is to prove that the findings are real evidence. He suggests engaging in the process of "structural corroboration...a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs" (p. 110). I tried to achieve this by employing different data collection vehicles (interviews, classroom observation, assignment readings, questionnaires, task assessments, newspaper searches). This triangulation of data (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994) helped to reinforce my finds and underline contradictions. I also continually discussed my results with other researchers informed on my topic in order to attain "consensual validation...the agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluations, and thematics of an educational situation are right" (Eisner, 1991, p. 112). For reliability, I provided a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the study's social context, an understanding of my position, and my methodologies. I also adhered to Spradly's (1980) "verbatim principal" (p. 68) and supplied exact accounts of my participants' replies.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) advise researchers to look for anomalies that undermine the claimed results. I tried to do this by placing myself in different roles within the classroom. For example, while engaged in my research, I worked as a substitute teacher in Sara's school district. In this role, I was privy to everyday conversations of students from around the city and
able to judge if their comments were similar to those expressed by my participants. I also worked at one of the Atlantic offices of the Department of Canadian Heritage, Multicultural sector; this allowed me to see how institutions in the area were dealing with diversity issues and if I was accurate in my understanding of the situation.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) provide direction similar to Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their advocacy for the use of self-criticism. Marshall and Rossman suggest that the researcher attempt to provide alternative explanations for the data. They also advise researchers to encourage colleagues to act as the “devil’s advocate” and critically evaluate the findings (p. 145). Part of my validity test involved inviting different people informed on my topic to examine my findings. Three people in particular provided me with insightful comments and criticisms: Dr. Cynthia Baker, a professor whose research interests includes minorities in isolated communities, Ms. Connie Tanaka, long-time co-ordinator of several local multicultural organizations, and Ms. Aparna Sanyal, a new-comer to the Maritimes.

I chose the first two women as they have an extensive history in working on issues of cross-cultural understanding in the Maritimes. Their professional opinions regarding my work contributed a valuable facet to the analysis, which I could not have developed on my own. Ms. Sanyal offered a more hands-on perspective on my research. Her experience as a visible minority new to the Maritimes provided a significant backdrop to my data. Many of the beliefs regarding minorities articulated by my participants became echoes of what Sanyal experienced in her interactions with adults. In the end, it is up to the reader to decide if this story has merit. My hope is that I have presented a reasonable argument for the validity of this topic and the data collected for it.
CHAPTER IV – THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Maritimers Reminiscing:

It is 8:00 am and four of us are sitting in a Buick Century, making our way to a small Maritime town. In the front seat are two of my colleagues from the multicultural sector of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Sheree Fitch, a children’s writer, and myself are sitting in the back. Our destination is a high school where we will be launching March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. Every November, the department launches the day in a different school. This year we chose a school with a high Native population. Our reason for this is two-fold. First, Native children have rarely been included in the March 21 launch (my suggestion to do so was received as a novel idea). Secondly, the recent Supreme Court Marshall Decision (Regina v. Marshall, 1999) allowing the Mi’kmaw and Maliseet population year-round fishing rights has detonated an explosion of fear and racial hatred in fishing towns across the Maritimes, leaving everyone tired and tense.

Because of her work in children’s rights, Sheree has been invited to be our keynote speaker. We wanted someone who could engage the students in a dialogue on racial harmony without boring them, like we would probably do. Sheree, I discover, spent some of her childhood in Lakeville. So, to pass the time, we reminisce over childhood memories. Our conversation turns to how hard it was to be different as a child. Sheree recalls a friend, Mary Wong, the little girl who used to run home from school. She wasn’t eager to get home; she was just trying to escape the kids chasing her.

“I was Mary’s only friend,” notes Sheree sadly, “People in [Lakeville] just didn’t know how to deal with difference. I guess they never saw it.”

I look at the road ahead of us. It and us are cradled between mountains and a river. Rays from the resplendent sun filter into the car as if to deny the emotional darkness that has recently cloaked small towns bordering on Native reserves. We turn a corner and the sun momentarily blinds me. Bringing my hands over my eyes, I turn to Sheree and note, “This is a beautiful country.”

Sheree glances my way, “I remember running home with Mary.” (Field notes, November 2, 1999)

Establishing a Framework:

My initial attempts to develop a theoretical framework of how I envisioned multiculturalism were frustrating. The theories I wanted to discuss and the research I wanted to cite were all present yet my personal signature seemed to be missing. I was continually nagged by the feeling that my words were sterile and distant; they did not tell the story I wanted to tell. This changed when I discovered a poem. My feelings about multiculturalism and my approach to this study were laid out in a few short lines. Although it may seem unorthodox, I wish to ground my theoretical framework within this poem.

If You Could Wear My Sneakers
If you were me
And I were you
For just a day
Or maybe two
Then maybe you
And maybe me
Would see the me
That you were too

If you could wear my sneakers
(You might have to plug your nose)
And if I could wear your shoes
(Even if they crunched my toes)
Maybe we could see the us
We never got to meet
The you and me
That might have found
More broccoli
To eat.

(Fitch, 1997, p. 6)

Sneakers:

If you could wear my sneakers, walk a mile in my shoes, stand in another person’s moccasins – proverbs we often cite along the path of respect and understanding. These are the very messages I tried to embody when I begun to conceptualize the framework for my research. My directive of how to facilitate students to converse with others so that they may learn from and work with others was grounded in these sayings.

Fitch’s exchange of sneakers almost instantly reminded me of Giroux’s concept of “border crossing.” Border crossing describes the transformation that people experience when their dialogues with others recognize the impact of such differences as race and class (Giroux, 1992a). In this type of dialoguing, students use critical thinking skills to hear and consider views other than their own. This exchange is important because it recognizes knowledge not as a fixed commodity but as a human construction, open to discussion and various interpretations. Such a forum invites diversity in thought, word, and action. In this sense, we “speak with others rather than for others (Giroux, 1991a, p.x, Italics in original); we wear another person’s sneakers.

In some Canadian cities, the borders we need to cross are in close proximity. They can exist in classrooms, neighbourhoods, and workplaces. However, what happens when the borders appear to outline distant communities rather than those in which we live? What
happens when visible diversity does not seem to be present? How do we encourage students to wear a different pair of sneakers when such sneakers do not seem to be readily available?

Now, what if the borders took on a creative and imaginative form? And sneakers became critical literacy skills which students could use to understand what lay beyond those borders? In other words, could multicultural stories help children create temporary borders that they could then cross and converse with others? My belief that they could became the foundation of my theoretical framework.

**Sneakers and Strangers:**

> Once or twice I had a mind to assure him that I was just like everybody else; quite an ordinary person.

> (Camus, *The Stranger*, 1946, p. 81)

A key feature in Giroux’s border crossing is the ability to approach the stranger, the “you” in Fitch’s poem. Embodied within the stranger is the notion of encountering difference. This goes hand in hand with the political conception of Canada as a land of different people living together – once strangers, now fellow citizens (New Brunswick website, 1999; Canadian Heritage website, 1999). However, for many areas, the notion of living together is a national phenomenon rather than a neighbourhood one. Those living in predominately-White places experience the reality of “ethnic encapsulation” (Banks, 1989), the antithesis of pluralism.

Ethnic encapsulation, as identified by Banks (1989), refers to those living in a homogenous situation thus receiving limited exposure to cultures other than their own. Since children tend to reflect the values and beliefs of their surroundings as young as 6 (Heath, 1983) and exhibit racial distinction and preference as early as three (Aboud, 1999; Goodman, 1952), the perception of the stranger develops even before children cross the school doorstep.

The concept of the stranger is interesting as it often conjures up connotations of the feared, the unwelcomed, and the other (Kristeva, 1991; Shabatay, 1991). Kristeva counters this definition insisting that the stranger is simply a reflection of the unknown within each of us. Arguing that “the foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities,” (1991, p. 1), Kristeva notes that the real encounter with the stranger is our own struggle to see something new. In reality, the stranger simply offers something that has so far been absent, something we have yet to recognize in ourselves. In this case, the self is not the individual identity but rather the national identity. In regards to my research location, it is the possibility of visible diversity within the Canadian identity that is mainly absent; thus diversity
is the stranger. Therefore, treatment of the stranger became an integral part of my conceptual framework.

Recognizing the stranger within our society, and ourselves involves the process of re-framing difference. Giroux (1996) offers this possibility in his discussion on critical pedagogy:

Difference in this case does not become a marker for deficit, inferiority, chauvinism, or inequality; on the contrary, it opens the possibilities for constructing pedagogical practices that deepen the project of critical democracy. Rather than precluding the possibility for broader forms of solidarity among different groups, a pedagogy and politics of cultural difference can be forged in social relations rooted in compassion, trust, and generosity. As such, difference becomes the basis for developing a broader discourse of cultural citizenship. (p. 299-300)

Thus the emphasis of action is on critiquing our use of difference and the implications that the word holds when meaning something less than.

The redefining of difference is quite fitting as the focus of my study is on the questions of definition and redefinition. I approached redefining the concept of the stranger though the vehicle of multicultural children’s literature. Stories became the way in which I could engage my participants in discussions on difference. On one hand there was a familiarity, as all of the texts were about fellow Canadians. At the same time, the different values and practices engaged by various groups and individuals living in Canada became the border that the students could cross, the stranger in their collective national identity. Through the creative endeavor of reading, my participants were able to “becom[e] ‘friends of one another’s minds’, even, perhaps especially, when the other is a ‘stranger’” (Witherell, 1991, p. 238). Stories allowed them the opportunity to dialogue with the stranger and discover that such an interaction is not necessarily a negative experience. Consequently, they were able to appreciate “the need for respect and dialogue with the stranger” (Shabatay, 1991, p. 136) and realize that “how the community responds to the stranger will either alienate one from another or will serve in work towards peace” (Shabatay, 1991, p. 137).

**Strangers, Sneakers and Stories:**

When used effectively, literature can help white children in our sheltered suburban areas to develop racial tolerance and a commitment to the eradication of social injustice. (Banks, 1994)

White children need books and stories in the home which are not white-centered and which reflect the heterogeneity of America and the world....Literature, art, and music courses and materials should contain representative contributions of black poets, authors, artists, and composers. (Citron, 1971)
Racial and ethnic awareness appears at approximately age three. Both minority and majority children prefer the attributes of the majority group. Use multicultural stories with minority protagonists in positive roles. Also use stories with an ethnic person participating in some individual activity. This will help the child to learn to differentiate between individuals within a minority group rather than between minority groups, and to learn that minorities lead lives independent of the majority. (Kehoe, 1983)

Most of the books children see are all white....There is no need to elaborate on the damage--much of it irreparable--to the Negro child's personality. But the impact of all-white books on white children is even worse. Although his white skin makes him one of the world's minorities, the white child learns from his books that he is kingfish. There seems little chance of developing the humility so urgently needed for world co-operation, instead of a world of conflict, as long as our children are brought up on gentle doses of racism through their books. (Larrick, 1965 [then president of the International Reading Association] cited in Citron, 1971:11)

As I discuss in chapter 2, numerous educators judge literature to be a positive and powerful conduit for learning (Frye, 1972; Norton, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978). They argue that children react to stories in ways that do not materialize in contact with textbooks. Unlike sterile textbooks, stories "have the power to touch the hearts of readers and move them to a type of action" (Rasinski & Padak, 1990, p. 578), recover a community's "sense of dignity and self-identity" (Ada, 1988, p. 224) or connect individuals normally worlds apart (MacPhee, 1997). It is this aspect of connection that led me to explore multicultural children's literature as a possible set of sneakers for border crossing.

The use of multicultural children's literature is not revolutionary. Because it is a relatively simple way to infuse diversity into the curriculum, multicultural texts are often found in elementary classrooms. Various publishing companies who have recognized the marketing potential of the genre have also aided its presence by increasing the number of books published under the multicultural label. However, the promise of literature is often limited by the absence of particular qualities that elevate reading from a learned response to that of an esthetic adventure. Two of these qualities are debate and imagination; each is a bind that ties my framework of sneakers, strangers, and stories together.

Tell Me a Problem:

Although multicultural and anti-racist texts are beginning to be regulars in the classroom, they are often void of dilemma, instead reflecting a perfect world. Even in stories where a conflict originally exists, the solutions are often unrealistic and simplistic. Moreover,
the quick fixes often reinforce stereotypes and/or disempower minority characters. This is apparent in such scenarios as when an authority figure of mainstream society steps in and solves the minority character's problem.

Of great necessity are stories in which the issues are more complex and situated within clear dilemmas. This does not always mean a new set of texts. As is demonstrated in chapter 6, often the same story yielded two different types of conversations – one passive, the other critical. The essence of difference between the two responses was the involvement of critical thinking regarding the underlying tensions in the story. One of the effective ways in which I managed to facilitate in some of my students critical thinking skills was to touch upon their sense of moral responsibility.

I found the idea of literacy connected to moral responsibility appealing as there was a sense of participation and legitimacy of different voices and knowledge. While I do not wish to delve into the philosophy of moral education (to do so here would be an injustice to the discipline), the relationship between social justice and literature does insist on an endeavor similar to that outlined in moral education:

The hallmark of moral education is the taking seriously of life and human conduct – in both essence and consequence, accompanied by an empathic call to others to do the same. Such a request requires bringing together the skills or moral deliberation and opportunities for cognitive, affective, and aesthetic responses to human suffering, injustice, caring and joy. (Witherell, 1991, p. 238)

Using stories as a springboard for debate provided a safe environment for my participants to explore human conditions such as those noted by Witherell above. To simply tell a story without thought or a call to one's moral responsibility may create sympathy but not empathy and certainly not action. Readers may feel sorry for the victims of racism but such feelings usually do not spur citizens into action. This action is evoked only when citizens feel a moral duty and a necessity for change.

Tappan and Brown (1989) suggest the use of narrative as an approach towards moral development and moral education. Keeping in mind their assertion that "narrative provides a very powerful means for understanding the human experience" (p. 185), I was interested in the power of storytelling when the medium is a fixed text. I discovered that, when placed in a critical thinking mode, the participants' moral reaction to humanity, articulated itself through both the texts and their ensuing narratives. In other words, not only did the students respond to an injustice in the text but also supplemented their observation with personal examples from
their own lives. The following is an interview segment in which David explains a moral decision that he had to make. His comment is provoked by a reading of *Marisol and the Yellow Messenger* (Smith-Ayala, 1994):

David: The other day, this guy in grade 3 called Ying a name but Ying didn’t hear him so he asked me what he said. I made something up because I didn’t want Ying to feel bad. I know I told a lie because that guy did say something. Plus, Ying sometimes plays with him but he doesn’t know that he is mean. Maybe I should have told Ying but I didn’t want to hurt his feelings. (Interview, May 12, 1998)

The stories used, as well as the narratives that followed, provoked a moral obligation on behalf of my critical reading students. This response is crucial for, as Tappan and Brown (1989) note, “individuals who experience little or no responsibility or authority in crisis situations are much more likely to act in ways that are harmful to their fellow human beings than are individuals who assume responsibility or claim authority for their actions” (p. 191). Because of my participants’ environment, it was difficult to ask them to respond to imaginary issues of visible diversity. They were already trained to provide the politically-correct answer. However, by instilling debate and moral response into the texts that we used, we were able to create the necessary environment.

**Imagining Possibilities:**

Another quality I have found missing in the use of multicultural children’s literature is the exhalation of the imagination. One of the greatest advocates of the imagination as an educative experience is Maxine Greene. Noting the dialectical relationship between social responsibility and imagination, Greene argues that an education based on the imagination ensures the survival of a humane and caring society; a society infused with the freedom to consider multiple ways of being (see Greene, 1984; 1993; 1996). Greene (1983) warns of a “terrible silence” (p. x) that will overcome us if we stop asking critical questions that are spurred on by the imagination. Like Greene, Darling-Hammond (d.n.k.) also demands the quest for creativity, seeing the imagination as a key to assuring a just and equitable society:

Democratic life requires access to empowering forms of knowledge that enable creative life and thought, and access to a social dialogue that enables democratic communication and participation. Growing up a humane and decent person who can appreciate others and take satisfaction in doing things well requires schools that allow for humanity and decency, that cultivate appreciation, that create social community, and that support deep learning about things that matter to the people in them. For all the other purposes of schooling, education is a source of nutriance for the spirit, although it can be, and too often is, conducted in a way that deadens and demoralizes. Schooling, managed as a
tedious and coercive activity, can create frustrations that must emerge sooner or later in self-depreciation or cruelty to others. However, where a real connection is made between students and teachers in the pursuit of meaningful accomplishments, the possibilities for developing life-long capacities for learning, doing, and relating to others are greatly expanded. (p. 85-86)

If the imagination can be used to create and sustain a just and human society, then it can also evoke possibility and diversity into images that already exist within that society. Given this, I felt compelled to communicate to my participants an invitation to use the imagination and to envision Canadian identities thus far out of their realm of thought. Again, since their most familiar experience was that of a predominately-White one, participants needed to imagine themselves in another person’s sneakers and then respond to the given situation in a manner that elicited their sense of fairness and equity.

Critical Literacy:

Using the imagination in a creative and unrestrained manner requires being able to see alternative ways of being and knowing. Such an understanding cannot exist without a critique of how society operates at any particular moment. Thus the promotion of the imagination had to be accompanied with the skill of critical literacy. My understanding of critical literacy has been heavily influenced by the work of such educators as Freire and Giroux and their assertion that the concepts of voice, dialogue, and social justice do not happen with the opening of a book but rather occur when the story is read as “a dialogue with others” (Giroux, 1991a, p.ix). As a result, there is a true sense of communication, the nemesis of racism. This reading of another person’s story requires knowledge and understanding of other ways of being. Thus Giroux insists that “educators need to offer students the opportunities to explore cultural difference in historical and contextual terms that open up rather than shut down partiality, possibilities, and dialogue. As border crossers, students must engage knowledge as citizens of the world” (1996, p. 299).

Giroux identifies critical thinking as a key component in the struggle for democracy. This democracy is defined not in the unification of a single identity and culture but rather through the freedom of expressing a diversified culture and identity. Necessary for such a democracy are thinking citizens:

The problems facing public and higher education around the issue of difference...need to be reformulated as a crisis in citizenship and ethics. This suggests that the solution to these problems lies ultimately in the realms of value and politics, not in emulating simplistic calls by conservatives for the creation of a common culture, but the creation of a democratic society in which differences
are affirmed and interrogated rather than dismissed as essentialist or disruptive. ...This means organizing curricula in ways that enable students to make judgements about how society is historically and socially constructed, how existing social relationships structure inequalities around racism, sexism and other forms of oppression. It also means offering students the possibilities for being able to make judgements about what society might be, what is possible or desirable outside existing configurations of power. (1991b, p. 508)

Like Giroux, Freire also criticizes an education system devoid of challenges and dialogue. He advocates critical literacy as a response to what he terms the "banking system" of education (Freire, 1970). In this system, children are filled with information and then expected to regurgitate that information as knowledge. Freire argues that such tactics dehumanize students by dulling their ability to think critically. The absence of this skill means that unjust arrangements can continue to flourish without fear of acute observation or reprisal. In contrast, critical literacy, the ability to read the world and be critical, is a vital instrument for political change. Critical literacy presented my participants with the opportunity to "come to a new awareness of selfhood and look critically at the social situation in which they find themselves" (Freire, 1970, p. 9). In this sense, critical literacy is more than "walk[ing] on the words" (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 35); it is

a pedagogy that educates students to govern, that provides them with the history, knowledge, and skills they will need in order to effectively assert their role as citizens capable of exercising moral responsibility through forms of public leadership. This suggests...linking the notion of cultural literacy not only to what people learn, but also to how they learn. It suggests a notion of literacy that corresponds with an understanding of the books, ideas, values, and social practices that have played and continue to play an important role in shaping this country's history....it means affirming those histories, traditions, stories, and everyday events that have been denied their rightful place as important legacies in the struggle for democracy and cultural justice. (Giroux & Freire, 1989, p. xi)

Essentially critical literacy is the ability to think; it is the ability to reconsider our experiences and recast them in a more thoughtful light. McLaren (1996) underlines the importance of this when he decryes:

What isn't being talked about in today's educational debate is the desperate need within our schools for creating a media literate citizenry that can disrupt, contest, and transform media apparatus so that they no longer have the power to infantilize the population and continue to create passive, fearful, paranoid, and apolitical social subjects. (p. 271)

Such an exercise is only possible if students are given a chance to deliberate about what they have learned and articulate a response. Eisner (1993) identifies thinking as one of the most
important lessons of schooling when he notes:

...the use of the mind is the most potent means of its development. What we think about matters. What we try to do with what we think about matters. And so it follows, what schools allow children to think about shapes, in ways perhaps more significant that we realize, the kind of minds they come to own. Education itself is a mind-making process. (p. 5)

With the words of Giroux, Freire, McLaren, Eisner, and other advocates of critical literacy in mind, I tried to encourage my students to critically analyze their beliefs about the Canadian identity, how they came to hold such beliefs and if such attitudes were compatible with the new knowledge acquired through the reading of the texts.

While accessing the class for critical thinking skills, I did discover that, when it came to racism, my participants knew the right answers. When Sara asked them if stereotyping was bad, they responded with a resounding yes. When Sara asked them if racism was acceptable, they replied with an adamant no. At times I felt as if I was hearing a script. My participants knew that racism was wrong because their teachers had told them so. But when asked to engage in a conversation on the effects of racism or to consider why it continues to exist, they were at a loss. They did not have the critical thoughts or skills to discuss these issues. In order to defend something as right or wrong, we must be able to say why. Therefore it is not enough to read another person’s story and support the hero or heroine. A critical understanding of the issues must accompany the reading. Otherwise, it may be too easy to dismiss another person’s viewpoint. As Shabatay notes, “If we don’t understand something we judge it inferior” (1991, p. 141). Similarly, advocates of critical thinking express that too much is judged as less than simply because we do not understand it.

Hope:

Hope is constituted in the need to imagine an alternative human world and to imagine it in a way that enables one to act in the present as if this alternative has already begun. (Simon, 1992, p. 4)

It must be noted that critical thinking is not just about discovering what is wrong with society; it is about feeling empowered to make the changes necessary for an equitable and learning society. Giroux (1996) underlines this difference when he notes, “If educators are to take the relationship between schooling and democracy seriously, this means organizing school life around a version of citizenship that educates students to make choices, think critically, and believe that they can make a difference” (p. 298).

However, saying something and finding a way to do it are two different things. One of
the problems with a lot of theory pertaining to multicultural education, as well as to its cousins, critical pedagogy and anti-racist education, is that it needs, in the words of Eisner (1992), "a positive agenda" (p. 316). I agree with Eisner (1992) in his observation that critical theorists are often more interested in displaying the shortcomings of schooling – raising consciousness, they say – than providing models toward which schools should aspire. ...The primary locus of their writings is found in books and learned journals; their ideas have been lively, insightful, and useful, but they speak essentially to intellectuals. They tend not to be read or heeded by teachers or school administrators. As far as I know they have had little or no impact on government educational agencies or on local school boards. My sense is that if their material were less strident, more hopeful, more generous, and more concretely constructive with respect to options, it would be much more likely to influence practice. (p. 315-16)

My own concern, identified in Eisner's words, is the need for hope. I wanted my participants to derive a sense of optimism from the study. I wanted their participation to be a positive and fun experience; not an illustration of their lack knowledge regarding difference. There were moments of hopelessness and anger, which I will discuss in chapter 6. However, I think my choice of models allowed for the discussion of these feelings in a safe and open environment. I wanted my participants to be critical but I also wanted them to feel enabled to change some of things that they criticized. McLaren (1996) identifies the absence of the second criterion in his review of education as a political issue. Using music as an example of how the youth express their discontent with society, McLaren notes, "Corporate rock's celebration of the subversion of adult authority gives its youthful listeners the illusion of resistance but not a language of critique or hope" (1996, p. 287). I did not want my research to produce the same deficiency. Discussing racism and privilege with my participants without providing them with a language to explore these issues would have left them feeling guilty and defensive. Instead, I wanted to make sure that I left them with a language that could help them address social problems with confidence. This language is not something I could just give them; to do so would be to impose my own ideas and undermine the very process of critical literacy. Instead it was something that we would have to co-create. Again we were back to the imagination:

Out of experiences, concepts are formed. Concepts are imaginative distillations of the essential features of the experienced world. They can be manipulated and modified and they can be used to generate possibilities that, though never encountered directly in the environment itself – infinity and dragons, quarks and goblins, for example – can have pragmatic and aesthetic value. Our conceptual
life, shaped by the imagination and the qualities of the world experienced, gives rise to the intentions that direct our activities. Intentions are rooted in the imagination. Intentions depend upon our ability to recognize what is and yet to imagine what might be.” (Eisner, 1993, p. 7)

So What Does the Framework Finally Look Like?

My research is thus framed around the acceptance of the stranger and the willingness to exchange sneakers in a journey of critical understanding of society. Nailing this frame together is the belief that literature can be used to help all of us “escape the prison of unconscious conditioning and become aware that other equally valuable social visions exist” (Frye, 1972, p. 10). This can be accomplished through the means of debate, imagination, and hope. Literature, as both an academic endeavor and esthetic experience, has the ability to develop our critical faculty, the skill to passionately examine the world around us. Of the utmost importance, literature provides us with a language. Not just the one consisting of our ABCs but of a language that binds us as humans. Sheridan Blair (1997) eloquently explains this act of communication in her observation that:

Most instances of language are acts of human relationships, which naturally have moral or ethical dimensions. If it is true that on one hand language enables us to turn human beings into abstractions and to thereby treat them as if they were not human, it is also the case that language enables us to enter the experiences of others with imagination and sympathy, to develop complex codes to define and refine moral behaviour, and to resolve conflicts through mediation rather than force. (p. 14)

If by trading sneakers, others change from abstractions to humans then the exercise has validity and worth. Those of us who support a multicultural perspective have the obligation to facilitate in students the movement from an uncritical acceptance of society to a critical consciousness of their world. We all touch this earth for such a short time. As educators, we have the opportunity to help students decide whether their own imprint will be one of dispassionate self-interest or critical involvement.

Choosing a Model:

Once I had developed my conceptual framework, I needed to situate it within a model that could be used in the classroom. As I began to think about what type of model I would like to use in the classroom, I was very sensitive to the amount of distance I have seen between the life of the academic researcher and the reality of the classroom. Too often our theories of sweeping change and curriculum overhaul have been blind to the everyday achievements and struggles encountered by teachers. I wanted to create a model of understanding that could
situate itself within Sara’s classroom, not preach ways to make things better. Any attempt to
the latter would have been an insult to Sara’s achievements as a teacher. Never was my
objective to label West End school completely racist and harmful to its students. Rather, my
purpose was to work with Sara and create a means for her students to have a better
understanding of the diversity within this country.

I wanted my model for data collection to be several things: critical, open, participatory,
safe, and hopeful. This is a tall order. After reviewing various models on the use of
multicultural literature, I decided upon Banks’ four level approach to literature (1989). Banks’
curricular model outlines the transition from the basic recognition of difference to the social
action towards change. The model is hierarchically arranged in terms of their level of impact
on racial issues.

At the lowest rung is the “contributions approach” in which students focus on the
holidays and heroes of various cultures. The texts used in this level describe different holidays,
heroes, and cultural stories. Such texts usually appear at particular times of the year or in
accordance to a certain event. For example, the students may read a book about Martin Luther
King Jr. during Black History month but not discuss any outstanding Black figures for the rest
of the year.

The second rung is described as the “additive approach.” At this point, information on
other cultures is included in the established curricular themes. For example, a unit on peace
may include a story about Ghandi’s non-violence movement. By including such books,
information about other cultures can be dotted throughout the curriculum. However, for both
the first two levels, the basic structure of the curriculum is unchanged. Multicultural literature
is used to supplement the curriculum rather than infuse it.

In most hierarchies, the lowest levels are often the least important. However, such is
not the case in Banks’ (1989) model. Since, when unassisted, children tend to choose books
that reflect their own social world (Ford & Koplyay, 1971; Rudman, 1984), these first two steps
open the door to a world of diversity by presenting stories of other cultures. However, in order
to encourage their students to step through this door and enjoy a global experience, teachers
need to move their classes on to the next two levels.

Unfortunately, exposure to multicultural texts often does not go beyond the first two
levels (Bieger, 1996; Ford, 1994). Rasinski & Padak (1990) problemitize this approach with
the observation that, “superficial treatment of different cultures can lead to a reinforcement of
stereotypes and misconceptions, including the notion that ethnic cultures are not integral parts
of the dominant culture” (p. 577). Nonetheless, practices that resemble the first two levels of Banks’ model are the ones most commonly seen in the classroom. Different reasons exist for this. One problem, which I have already identified, is the lack of available material. Dowd (1992) notes that “only about 10 percent of the almost 5,000 titles published in the United States for this audience [children] are multicultural in nature” (p. 219). During one of my classroom discussions, one of my participants timidly commented, “no offense but a lot of these books are boring” (Field notes, May 6, 1998). I will admit that some of my choices were less than exceptional; however, the lack of available books (especially Canadian-based books) further minimize the range of choice. Acerbating this problem is the reality that some of the books that claim to multicultural are not so and may actually solidify stereotypes (Ford, 1994).

Another reason many teachers tend to maintain a surface look at the texts is due to a lack of training as to how to use multicultural children’s literature in their classrooms (Camarata, 1991; Dowd, 1992). Consequently, when teachers do work with the genre they tend to present multiculturalism in the old song and dance framework. I call this the three-monkey design: we see no evil, say no evil and hear no evil about racism. In this framework, we simply read a nice story about another culture. There is little room to discuss racial and cultural inequities within this approach. It is easier to simply assign some particular time (such as Black History Month) or theme (such as houses around the world) and use multicultural education in this capacity than it is to infuse it throughout the curriculum.

Banks labels the third level, as the “transformative approach.” Here students learn about historical and current events from the perspective of various cultural groups. In his 1998 AERA address, Banks recalls his confusion over his textbook’s depiction of happy slaves (Banks, 1998). Such images, which are in opposition to the transformative approach, reflect the dominant manner of teaching social stories – that being the telling of stories from the perspective of the dominant group. In the case of Banks’ old textbook, the aim was to show a particular society in a harmonious state, not encourage discussions about subjection and inequality. The transformative approach expands the dialogue so various groups can voice how they perceive particular events and society at large. Such an approach introduces students to the multi-perspectives of our society and demonstrates the interconnectedness of different cultural groups of a pluralistic country.

The “decision-making and social action approach” represents the highest level of Banks’ model. Here students carry what they have learned from the previous three levels and use their knowledge to identify, criticize, and solve existing inequalities. It is at this stage that
students begin to explore dilemmas such as the lack of minority presence in their curriculum. Multicultural literature can become the catalyst in spurring students in action. This is an appropriate role for literature for

in a multicultural curriculum there are few stimuli with greater potential to move people to action than literature. Because it tells the stories of human events and the human condition and not simply the facts, literature does more than change minds; it changes people's hearts. And people with changed hearts are people who can move the world. (Rasinski & Padak, 1990, p. 580)

Easier Said Than Done:

Applying a pre-formatted model to a given situation sounds easy. Interactions with my participants proved that it is not. As I discuss in chapter 6, the first two levels of Banks' model were fairly easy to implement. My participants enjoyed the new books and often verbalized their desire for more material. Complications arose when I attempted to move them up to the third and fourth level. At this point, most of my participants actually resisted acquiring a greater understanding of diversity. They were bothered by racism, privilege, and unjust systems in a way that could not be put to words. As a result, they withdrew their participation. The new knowledge threatened old beliefs rendering the students extremely reluctant to discuss difference.

I realize now that several factors impeded our progress. Of all of these factors, context was the most crucial. When the more challenging books were presented, I was not mindful of the time and place from which the students' experiences had developed. Reed (d.n.k.) refers to the necessity of proper presentation with the observation that "only when books are sensitively presented at the "teachable" moment can they touch the students and guide them in their growth to become imaginatively empathetic, critically aware human beings" (p.16). Our teachable moments took a long time to occur because information was not being shared in a manner that appreciated the significance of the particular time and place. Only after I discovered a workable solution did things change.

One Solution, Two Models:

My solution relied on re-envisioning Banks' (1989) model to fit my participating classroom. Part way through my study, I divided the model into two parts. For most of the class, I stayed at the first two levels. I reserved the last two stages for my critical reading group. With this latter group, my participants and I worked to develop the skills of critical literacy as defined by Giroux and Freire and examine the texts from a critical perspective.
I also used Banks’ model to contemplate the role of the teacher. Like Banks (1989), who says very little about the impact of literature on the teacher, I did not have plans to explore this area. However, as time went on, I witnessed a change in Sara’s approach to multicultural issues to the point that she took on a large community-based project regarding prejudice and acceptance. The project was so successful that she is currently in the process of expanding it into an annual event. This change was unexpected but is now my addition to Banks’ model. This supplement is described in chapter 7.
CHAPTER V – SETTING THE CONTEXT

Choosing how to present my data was not any easy decision. Initially, I wanted to write about everything I had experienced during my two years in Sara’s class. Every time I decided that I would leave something out, a large hole in my study would suddenly appear, screaming at me that my research would be flawed without its presence. Ironically, it was an actual trip that taught me the best way to present my research journey. I had just returned from California and was showing a friend a few pictures from our nine roles of film. As I opened the third package of the mountains of Yosemite National Park, my friend said she had seen enough. I was taken aback. For me nearly every picture had a story; my friend, however, was more interested in the larger narrative of my trip.

Location, People and Schools:

With this lesson in mind, it is the larger story that I present in the following pages. I have provided a description of the various settings of my research: the Maritimes, Lakeville, West End School and the class itself. I have worked to give a tour of what I experienced in Sara’s class and highlighted the memorable moments with vignettes, interviews, stories, and a collection of other souvenirs. Knitted among these memorable pieces is the emerging picture of what these students see as Canadian and the impact that the multicultural literature had on them. Initially, the pieces may seem disjointed; I know they did to me at times. However, I hope that at the end, a reader can look back and make sense of the distance traveled.

Lakeville and the Maritimes:

As I did not want to reveal the exact location of my study, describing Lakeville became somewhat of a challenge. Each city in the Maritimes enjoys its particular characteristics, making it unique in its own way. Nevertheless, there are common descriptors among the locations. By providing a general description of the location, I hope that the reader will have some sense of the area.

By Maritime standards, Lakeville is an average size city. The city is growing both culturally and economically, conditions that have been fostered with the help of the local university and new businesses. Although predominately-White, Lakeville is home to one of the Maritime’s three largest minority groups; each is described below. Residents do have some contact with this group; however, interaction is limited with many members of the minority group living in particular areas of the city. Quiet tensions exist between the mainstream
population and this particular minority group which sometimes erupt into angry exchanges. Nevertheless, the crime rate is low and most citizens feel safe in the city.

Like the rest of the Maritimes, tourism is a major industry in Lakeville, bringing people from all over the world into the city. Other industries include technology, forestry, and manufacturing. Historically, Lakeville has been a mainly blue collar city; however industry growth is changing its socio-economical landscape giving it a more mixed status. Although there has been some in-migration, most of the city’s population was born in the area (Statistics Canada website, 1996). It is not uncommon to meet someone in Lakeville who has never left the Maritimes.

**Minority Groups in the Maritimes:**

Throughout the Maritimes, minority and immigrant communities are relatively small. There are three dominant minority communities within the Maritimes; these are the Acadians, indigenous Blacks and the First Nations People (primarily Mi’kmaw and Maliseet). All three groups have fought their own battles with racism. The following is a brief description of each group. While my summaries do not pretend to provide the nuances of each group, they should give the reader some understanding of the minority groups that my participants would be most likely to encounter.

**The Acadians:**

The Acadians represent a majority of the French population living in the Maritimes (Basque et al., 1999). Their presence in the Maritimes can be traced back to the early 1600s (Basque et al., 1999). One of the most significant episodes in Acadian history is the Expulsion of 1755 in which, after refusing to swear allegiance to the British government, Acadians were forced to leave their homes in the Maritimes and flee south (Canadian Heritage Gallery website, 2000). In 1763, the Acadians were allowed to return to the area but only on certain conditions. Among these conditions was the restrictive choice of venue, much of it consisting of poor quality land. This forced the concentration of the Acadian population within the rural areas of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (Basque et al., 1999).

Although not all Acadian families were involved in the Expulsion, the event has become a unifying story among the group, tying them together in a collective experience with racism.

Unfortunately, after the Acadian people returned, they continued to experience discrimination on both a personal and institutional basis. For example, French secondary schools were often not available in rural areas forcing parents to either school their children in English or send them away to French schools in the cities (Axelrod, 1997). Even today,
Acadian parents in all three Maritime provinces continue to fight for the availability of French schools in their area (Mediascope, 1999 & 2000). Furthermore, several Acadians supplied me with stories of being denied service in French by both small and major businesses (Interview Aug. 8, 1998; Dec. 9 a & b, 1999).

Despite systemic racism, the Acadian population has empowered itself in ways not dreamed possible two decades ago. In reflecting on the progress of Francophones living in the Maritimes, Lucie Lebouthillier, manager of Citizenship and Canadian Identity for the Department of Canadian Heritage, Atlantic Region notes, “People believed that the French were meant for domestic jobs. The French [here]…were the Blacks of America. In one generation, the French went from surviving to consuming” (Interview, December 9a, 1999). In reality, the population has done more than become simple consumers. Pascal Robichaud, director of L’Année de Francophone 1999, asserts, “The French have really come into their own. Look around and you will see that a lot of the cultural and economic growth in the area is being spearheaded by the French.” (Interview, December 9b, 1999). Robichaud is correct in his observation. The Maritimes is home to many Francophones who have succeeded in the areas of the arts, economics, academia, and government, to name a few.

In 1999, Maritime Francophones brought a spotlight to their world when Moncton, New Brunswick hosted the La Summit de Francophone, an international meeting of fifty-nine French-speaking countries. This was only the second time that the summit had been held in Canada. The event became a showcase for New Brunswick, the only bilingual province in Canada. For months preceding and during the event, the achievements of the Acadians were highlighted in a magnitude never before witnessed by the Francophone population in the area.

Success, however, has not come without a price. The achievements of the Acadian population have produced a backlash of resentment by both the English and some immigrant groups. For Lebouthillier, the matter rests on privilege:

If you are the rulers of a society and in order to enjoy privilege all you have to do is have that birthright, well would you give that up? The English were privileged from the old system. Then, speaking English without any supposed accent was an asset. Of course, they resent the new system. Just open any [local] paper on any day and look at the letters to the editor. You can easily find an anti-French letter. You know, you hear people say, “You have to speak French to get a public service job.” That’s wrong; you need to be bilingual. One is a birth status; the other is a skill. (Interview, December 9, 1999)

Robichaud, on the other hand, believes that the problem lies with the perception that many Maritimers have of the French:
There has always been a sense among the English that they were taking care of the French. For example public taxes that went to French schools, hospitals, or translation. The only time people think about the French as a distinct group of people is when we are on the news wanting this right or that right. We look like we always take and never give. The truth is a little bit different. I imagine that it’s hard for immigrant groups too. They come here and feel that not only do they have to learn English but French too. Plus a lot of times they are not informed about the benefits of French immersion and their kids miss out making them feel resentful. Maybe this is why a lot of minorities leave the area. I don’t know. I’m sure they have problems in other areas as well. It isn’t just the French thing but they might believe this. We need to understand each other better; of course you fear what you don’t know. (Interview, December 9, 1999)

Despite their accomplishments, many Acadians still carry a sense of inferiority that continues to undermine the progress and survival of the French population. Sentiments regarding language is a perfect example of this; many Acadians continue to perceive English to be the language of success. As Robichaud notes:

The choice used to be between speaking only English or being beaten up for speaking French. Even now, a lot of French people speak English a majority of the time in order to get rid of their accent and fit in. Did you know that approximately 39% of the French population are considered to be completely assimilated?” (Interview, December 9b, 1999).

Attempts to retain the French language and cultural heritage are often met with resistance by the mainstream Anglo population. Says Pierre Fournier, a cameraman for French productions, “Sometimes, if you speak French at a store or restaurant, you get ignored; you don’t get served. I used to take this but now I make a point of speaking French because it is my right in a bilingual country, no matter what part of Canada I am living in” (Interview, August 8, 1998).

The African-Canadians:

For nearly four hundred years, African-Canadians have lived in Canada (Spalding, 1999). The arrival of Blacks in the Maritimes can be told by different stories. Some Blacks first arrived as slaves brought in through port cities such as Halifax, Nova Scotia while others escaped to Canada through the Underground Railroad. Blacks also arrived as immigrants, servants, and settlers from other parts of the country. Acadian farms that had been left vacant after the Expulsion were offered to both Black and White settlers. Similarly, Black Loyalists were promised land in New Brunswick cities such as Saint John and Fredericton. In every case, fertile land was awarded to White farmers while smaller and less profitable packages were given to the Black citizens (Spalding, 1999).
The province of Nova Scotia was the first area in Canada to form significantly large Black communities (Hill, 1993). One of the most memorable Black communities in the area was Africville, a settlement north of Halifax. The community began with fifty-four residents in 1851 but grew to over four hundred a century later (Hill, 1993). By 1960, citizens owned land, ran business, held jobs, and achieved success. For example, George Dixon, the first black boxer to win a world championship, grew up in Africville. (Boyd, 1989). Despite the fact that community members paid taxes, living conditions were extremely poor. Although Africville existed within Halifax city limits, the city refused to provide adequate basic services such as sewage and electricity services; residents sometimes had to use old car batteries to keep their homes warm (Boyd, 1999). To add insult to injury, the city located a garbage dump on the outskirts of Africville yet refused to provide the community with garbage service. The community existed for nearly one hundred years before it was destroyed. In an act of extreme irony, the Halifax city council decided that the lack of services made the community unfit to live in and demanded its closure. Garbage trucks were sent to collect the people and their property while homes, churches and schools were bulldozed down (Hill, 1993). Deaf to the community’s protest, the city relocated Black citizens to public housing in Halifax where members then faced, and continue to face, high levels of unemployment and underachievement.

Although Blacks in Nova Scotia have experienced centuries of racism, two major events in 1991 brought national attention to the Black community. The first occurred at the high school in Cole Harbour, a small community just outside of Halifax. A fight between a Black and a White student led to RCMP charges against eighteen youth, ten of whom were Black (Henry et al., 2000). The Black community protested, claiming that the conflict and its results were indicative of larger racial problems in Nova Scotia (Calliste, 1994).

In the same year, Black youths were refused entrance into a downtown Halifax bar. A fight ensued and a Black youth was stabbed. This event precipitated a protest march in which over a thousand people participated. In July 1991, the three levels of government agreed to meet with Black community members and form an advisory group to combat racism in Nova Scotia (Henry et al., 2000). Although positive action has come out of both events, they continue to be points of reference for Nova Scotian Blacks’ discussions on the continual existence of racism.

Two notable indigenous Black communities exist in New Brunswick, the larger one in Saint John, the other in Fredericton. Collectively, there are approximately three thousand Blacks living in New Brunswick (Spalding, 1999). Blacks in New Brunswick have yet to attain
most of the advancements achieved by their Nova Scotian counterparts. In fact, although Nova Scotia’s Department of Education has established a Black education program (Calliste, 1994), the New Brunswick Department of Education, as well as Prince Edward Island, has so far failed to make significant movement towards any type of anti-racist education. The legacy of racism is obvious. While New Brunswick’s unemployment rate in 1991 was 12.2%, the unemployment rate for Black citizens was a staggering 25.7% (Spalding, 1999). Research on racism in New Brunswick, found that Black youth suffered from extreme racism to the point that many felt fearful of society (Baker & Varma, 1999).

Racism for Blacks is a problem despite what part of the Maritimes they call home. In Canada, in general, the largest minority group in prisons is Aboriginal people. In Atlantic Canada, the largest incarcerated minority is African Canadian. The number of African Canadians imprisoned increased 62.5% between 1992 and 1997 (Safire, 1998). It does not appear that the situation will get much better as Black communities around the Maritimes continue to experience extreme poverty, unemployment, and high dropout rates (Henry et al., 2000).

The Mi'kmaw and Maliseet:

The majority of the Aboriginal population living in the Maritimes represent either the Mi'kmaw or Maliseet tribe. There are thirty-eight Native Reserves in the Atlantic region of Canada with a total of 38,000 people (Statistics Canada website, 1996). Over half of the reserves are in states of high poverty and social distress (Government of Canada, 1999). Unlike other minority groups, the majority of Aboriginal people in the Maritimes do not live in close contact with the rest of the population, residing instead on Federal reserves. Consequently, the possibility of a non-Aboriginal never encountering an Aboriginal person is quite high. This lack of contact allows stereotypes and racism to flourish. Similar to Aboriginal populations across the country, First Nations People in the Maritimes face daily doses of racism preventing many from venturing off of the reserve and interacting with the non-Aboriginal population (Baker & Varma, 1999; Knockwood, 1992).

Although the mainstream population across Canada is exhibiting a declining birth rate, the Aboriginal birth rate is nearly three times greater than the non-Aboriginal population (Frideres, 1998). Furthermore, the majority of the Aboriginal population is quite young with over one-third younger than 15 and over half younger than 25 (Frideres, 1998). So as the rest of Canadians experience an aging population, the Aboriginal population is just reaching its prime. In the Maritimes, discrepancies between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population hold
implications for the required increase in workforce. As members of other populations leave, or die, the population bank from which they will have to be replaced will become increasingly Aboriginal in population. Consequently, a decision must be made: will we have a young Aboriginal population that is capable of and welcomed in joining workforce or will racism continue to rob society of its valuable human resource? Choosing the former will require an extensive battle against racism as well as educational policies designed to make schooling a more successful endeavor for Aboriginal students (Baker & Varma, 1999; Knockwood, 1992).

Mi'kmaw and Maliseet people living in the Maritimes were recently thrust into the public eye due to the Marshall decision (Regina v. Marshall, 1999), a Supreme Court decision recognizing treaties guaranteeing their unlimited fishing rights. Celebrations among the Aboriginal population were eclipsed by an instant backlash of anger and hate. In an unpublished document prepared for the Department of Canadian Heritage's Atlantic Region Aboriginal Think-Tank, the action following the Supreme Court decision was described as a threat to Canadian social cohesion:

The latest reaction to the Supreme Court of Canada's Marshall Decision, at its worst, took the form of racism, hate and violence against Aboriginal people and destruction of their property. At best, it was a wake-up call for long overdue action on the concerns of Aboriginal people. Social cohesion was undermined and indications are strong that continuing threats to social cohesion exist as additional confrontations and civil disobedience are forecast for the coming spring of 2000. (Government of Canada, 2000)

Unfortunately, the prediction of future violence proved accurate in the summer of 2000. After months of deliberations between First Nations reserves and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, several reserves and their neighbouring communities, continue to teeter on the edge of violence and social disintegration.

Due to my experiences as an educator on a Mi'kmaw reserve and program officer for Aboriginal issues with the Department of Canadian Heritage, I have seen first hand the destructive nature of systemic and overt racism on both children and adults. One of my saddest memories at an elementary First Nations school involved an assignment in which students were asked to write an essay about what they would like to be when they grew up. Within minutes, one student presented me with a picture of the school and its playground. Hanging from one of the trees, was the image of the young child. He had written below, "I will never grow up." Here was blatant testimony of a child who, after seeing too much hopelessness, could not even speak of a future.
Other Minority Groups:

Besides the three largest minority groups that I have just identified, several small ethnocultural communities also exist in the Maritimes. On the whole, the Maritimes' immigrant population represents approximately 3% of the entire population. Of this 3%, 85% are of European descent (Dyer, 2000). The non-immigrant visible minority community represents less than 1% of the entire population (Statistics Canada website, 1996).

Attaining and keeping minorities in the Maritimes has always been a challenge (Dyer, 2000). Various factors contribute to this situation. First of all, many predominately-White locations are not culturally friendly. By this I mean cultural supports such as ethnic grocery stores, religious centers, and entertainment venues found in larger cities are frequently absent in smaller areas. The lack of such supports force residents to either do without basic needs, such as food staples, or take long and expensive trips to acquire such goods. To cite an example, Sara had to have several items brought in from Montreal in order to celebrate her daughter’s Bat Mitzvah.

A second reason for high migration out of the Maritimes is due to the difficulty attaining social and emotional support from the small ethnocultural communities. Research demonstrates that such supports are vital. Baker’s (1994) exploration of the lives of twenty culturally-isolated immigrants in a New Brunswick city found that immigrants and refugees settling in areas lacking a large personal ethnocultural community find the experience extremely stressful and are vulnerable to incidences of psychiatric disorders. Baker (1994) summarizes that:

Being a culturally-isolated immigrant entails a sense of discontinuity between the past and the present and produces a period of heightened sensitivity to others. Informants felt propelled from their country into an alien environment and were suddenly immersed in a new culture. Their emotional energies were directed towards getting a foothold in their new society. This was a highly stressful process that was both encouraged and discouraged by pervasive thoughts of the future, which permeated the participant’s existence. The very fact of being culturally isolated, however, tends to reduce the visibility of immigrants who lack the support of an ethnocultural community. (p. 1064-1065)

Larger ethnocultural communities existing in other provinces and the United States have created a one-way retreat out of the Maritimes.

Finally, keeping any of its population in the area has been a challenge for the Maritimes. Better job opportunities and perceived increased standard of living have always attracted local citizens, especially the youth. In the case of minority individuals, higher
demand for employees in other parts of Canada and the United States has helped to negate the possibility of racism, which can keep individuals under or unemployed. This does not mean that barriers such as glass ceilings are not present; however a greater need for employees increases the chances of employment.

**West End School:**

West End School is nestled in one of Lakeville’s oldest neighbourhoods and serves students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The street on which the school is situated begins with co-operative housing and ends with some of the most expensive houses in the city. Overall, West End is considered to be one of the more affluent schools in the city. The teachers and administrators of West End may argue against this perception but the school offers a variety of programs viewed as luxuries in other schools. These include K-8 French Immersion, an enrichment and resource program, various extra-curricular activities, a computer center, and a hot lunch program. The school also enjoys a strong parental volunteer force and it is common to see them in the school. Several West End students are engaged in out of school programs and are often pictured in the local paper for various accomplishments.

West End School resembles most schools built in the 1950s. If you were to have an aerial view of the school, you would see a large two-story red brick U. Between the two prongs of the U, as well as behind it, is a large field that merges into the backyards of the surrounding houses. Facing the school, you would see a gravel parking lot on the right side of the school and a baseball field on the left. The students play in both areas during recess and lunch. The front of the school overlooks a tree-lined street and has a view of a Catholic church opposite it. The entire scene is set in a quiet residential neighbourhood that belies its short distance from the city’s downtown area.

Walking up the steps, visitors may encounter a friendly sign asking all school guests to please go to the office and pick up a visitor badge:

*Upon entering West End school, everyone is expected go upstairs to the office and register with the office. This monitoring program is sort of an on-again off-again thing. Today it is on-again so I climb the stairs to the office. At the top of the stairs is a long hallway. On the right of the hallway is a wall of windows overlooking the gymnasium below. On the left are a few classrooms, offices, the staff room and then more classrooms. These halls are seldom empty. At this moment two tiny students stand at the telephone while one explains that he has lost his lunch. Teachers stream in and out of the offices and staff room even though it is only 10:20 am. Pushed up against the wall of windows is an old fashioned student’s desk, the kind where the chair is attached to the desk by a metal rod. A parent volunteer for the hot lunch program is crammed into the*
desk counting the lunch tokens that are to be distributed to each class. Above and to her left, placed between two windows, is a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II. It was obviously taken a long time ago. Beneath the portrait is the school's mission statement engraved on a copper face. The statement reads:

The mission of [West End] school, in partnership with our parents, volunteers, home and school, and community is to inspire each student to reach his/her potential in order to maximize talents and realize dreams; to be a productive, caring, and responsible citizen as well as a life long learner and creative thinker by providing optimum learning experiences and resources in a safe, secure and friendly environment.

Sandwiched between the office and the staff room is a bulletin board displaying newspaper articles of various students and alumni. An older student lingers in front of the board delaying her return to her classroom. She sees me standing by the office and writing in a book (my field notes) and hurries off in the other direction. I enter the office and the secretary smiles at me. “Just who I was looking for. Can you supply tomorrow?” I answer that I can and my name is jotted down in a small book. After that I get my badge and walk towards Sara’s class to see if I can observe her students the day after tomorrow. After a quick chat with Sara, I head back to the doors facing the parking lot. Pausing to look at the students’ artwork taped to the walls, I realize that this hall could be in any Canadian city or town. What distinguishes each is how the outside world influences the direction of inside these walls. I think about the schools that I have been in that have a more diverse student population. Were they any different? I leave the school and head towards my car with plans on returning tomorrow in a different capacity. (Field notes, November 17, 1997)

I should note that besides being my research site, I have enjoyed a variety of connections to West End School. As I am a licensed teacher, I have temporarily replaced several of the teachers at West End and other Lakeville schools. Sara often asked me to help her during fieldtrips and to replace her during her absences. These ranged from short time periods when Sara had to meet with a parent or administrator to full days when Sara could not be in the classroom at all. I had no problem with attending fieldtrips as this allowed me to see my participants in a variety of circumstances. However, I was at first reluctant to replace her completely. I worried that my role as researcher would be compromised as the students would see me as an authority figure and alter their communications with me. In actuality, the opposite occurred. My participants saw me as a routine occupant of the classroom and treated me accordingly. They were incredibly adept at acclimatizing themselves to my various roles (this includes trying to give me a hard time the first time I acted as Sara’s supply teacher) and
adjusted their interactions with me accordingly. In turn, received a golden opportunity to converse with the students through a variety of voices.

Connections existed outside the school walls as well. During the time of my research, I lived in the West End neighbourhood. Students from the school often appeared on my doorstep, requesting my financial assistance in the various fundraisers held by the school. The principal of the school lived three houses down from me and we often encountered each other on the sidewalks. This was the “baggage” that I carried into the school and my participating classroom.

The Classroom:

The following journal entry is a collection of observations during my first few visits to Sara’s classroom. In review, I discovered that I had focussed mainly on the descriptive layout of her room. This is actually quite ironical, as classroom appearance was one of the least important factors for Sara. Unlike many of the other teachers who were constantly changing classroom displays and materials, Sara left everything in her room pretty much the same. Variety was sometimes introduced through decorations for special days or themes such as Valentine’s Day or wintertime but even that was limited. Consequently, I could have written the following entry two years later and it would have appeared pretty much the same:

Like the school in which it is situated, Sara’s classroom is very typical in many ways. It consists of desks, black boards, bulletin boards, and tables. The entrance to the room is at the front left corner of the room. The door is usually kept closed. On the left side of the door is a bulletin board covered with newspaper articles relevant to the class’s current topic of study as well as students’ pictures, gifts given to Sara. Next to the bulletin board is the main blackboard, which takes up the remaining wall space. All teaching seems to be done in front of this board. Sara stands there to deliver a lesson and then writes the supporting information on the board. Squeezed in the far corner of the board is the homework list. Students are responsible for writing down their own homework, getting it signed by parents and then showing Sara the next day.

Above the board is a store-bought banner illustrating the cursive alphabet. The alphabet is accompanied with twenty-six words, one for each letter. The theme of the banner is occupations and the creators have gone out of their way to present women and men in untraditional roles. For example, the picture next to a – astronaut is a woman and n – nurse is a man. Sara has told me before that the gender issue is especially important to her.

Moving the eye clockwise, the far right wall holds about 30 coat hooks and is covered by an array of coats, many of which have brand name logos scripted across the backs. In the winter, boots, mittens, scarves, and hats lay in

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4 Sara actually had a couple of different researchers as well as teacher aids in her classroom. Consequently, the students were used to interacting with various adult figures.
disarray in front of the wall. During this time, Sara often has to allow the students extra time to prepare for the end of the day as some students would certainly miss their buses, wasting time mining for their personal winter paraphernalia. It is the pile of winter gear that creates the most distinctive smell in the classroom — dampness. Rather than a feeling, it is a scent that wafts through the room. After a couple of hours in the class, a person can feel chalk dust on their skin, which is a result of the cheaper chalk, purchased as a means to save funds. When added to the dry heat, the smell and chalk dust can soon make a newcomer uncomfortable. Neither Sara nor the students seem to notice this feeling or the smell.

The back wall is actually a wall of small and large windows. It is possible to open the row of small windows but the large ones above them are sealed closed. On the final wall is another blackboard that is more of an easel. Leaning against the board are various signs outlining class duties, class rules, a good manners guide, and student accomplishments. Standing at a right angle to the left of the board is a bookshelf. Shoved up against the middle of the board are two tables; one is used to exhibit books, the other serves as a quiet workspace and is my preferred seat.

Sara's desk is sandwiched between the table that I use and the door. This position allows her full view of the students and vice versa. Although Sara's desk is covered with piles of paper and books, I have the impression that some type of order is maintained.

The students' desks run parallel to the coat wall in rows that face the main blackboard. The grade 4s sit on the coat wall side whereas the grade 5s are closer to Sara. Sara has told me that on the few occasions that the students do group work, desks are not moved but rather students are expected to find suitable floor space.

Covering the free wall space and the large windows are commercial and handmade posters. These include a multiplication table, winter signs, space posters (the current theme), and punctuation rules. This morning, Sara told me that the principal asked her to spruce up her room a bit, a request she did not appreciate. Although the decor does not strike me as spectacular; I have notice that some of her posters depict people of different racial backgrounds. (Field notes, November 13, 1997)

If I was asked to choose one word for Sara's class, it would have been discipline. Moreover, it was a type of discipline that influenced every aspect of her class from layout (as I describe above) to student expectations. Except for periods of transition, the class was usually very quiet. This did not mean that everyone was on task but it did make it easier for Sara to spot culprits. To a newcomer, it would have been difficult to differentiate between the grade 4s and 5s. With the exception of math and spelling, most of the same material was taught to both grades. When this was not the case, Sara easily moved from one grade to the other. Again, this was mostly due to her emphasis on complete silence and order. Having supply taught this class, I quickly discovered that it was Sara's presence that kept everyone on track.

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More often than not, Sara dealt with discipline problems on her own. Interactions with parents told both success and not so successful stories. By this I mean that there did not appear to be a middle ground; parents either appreciated Sara's firmness or objected to it. Both reactions resulted in a steady stream of parents moving through her doorway. She noted that she enjoyed a very close relationship with both the principal and vice-principal. She also appeared to be on good terms with the rest of the staff; although she was openly critical to me regarding a few her students' other teachers.

It was not unusual to find Sara in her classroom at 6:00 in the evening. Besides being on several home and school committees, Sara was also responsible for various tasks such as the school laminating and scheduling. I never did discover if she sought out these obligations or if they were handed to her. Most probably, it was a combination of both. In the moments when it all became too much for her, Sara would roll her eyes and yell (if she wanted the class to hear her), “Thank God I’m close to retirement.” At the time when I first arrived in 1997, Sara was four years away from retirement and had so far spent her entire career at West End School.

Although Sara’s class was ordinary in several ways, it was different from many other Lakeville classrooms in one important factor—diversity. In a city where most schools had a visible minority population of less than 1% and an invisible population of an equally small number, the amount of diversity in Sara’s class was certainly unusual. The following are descriptions of Sara’s class for 1997-98 and 1998-99 through the lenses of diversity:

1997-98: There are twenty-six students in Sara’s class. Of these twenty-six students, I can see a variety of examples of diversity. Two of the students are landed immigrants. Michael was born in Germany but has lived in Canada for several years; Ying emigrated from China with his family a year ago. Ying has a fairly good grasp of English and most of the students make the effort to understand him. There is also another student of Chinese descent, Steven, a mentally challenged child. Steven was born in Canada; however Sara tells me that communication with the home is difficult and sparse, as his parents do not speak English. Kelly is physically challenged in that she is nearly deaf and requires a special hearing apparatus that includes a piece that Sara must wear. Even with the hearing aid, students need to pay extra attention to their pronunciation when speaking with Kelly. Finally, there is a young student who identifies herself with a religious group that believes in something called the Pixies. (Field notes, November 13, 1997).

1998-99: This class consists of twenty-five students. Steven is still here and is the only visible minority in the class. Two students from religious minority groups are also in the class—June, Sara’s daughter, and Sean, a Jehovah Witness. The students that I have talked to do not know much about Sean’s religion except that he cannot receive gifts and that he does not stand for the
national anthem. Kelly is also still with Sara. Sara believes that she now has three challenged students in her class as she is including Billy, a boy with a severe stuttering problem. Both this class and last year's have come in contact with three minority teacher-figures: Sara, Mrs. Sang, their French teacher who is of Chinese descent and myself. (Field notes, September 9, 1998).

In a strange way, I was originally dismayed about the diversity in Sara’s class. To have a class with landed immigrants, visible minorities, invisible minorities, and challenged students was rare and not exactly reflective of the Lakeville school experience. However, like many of the other things that I originally worried about, this ended up being a blessing in disguise, an opportunity for learning. In essence, I experienced the best of both worlds. I encountered students who experienced a mainly-White world and observed their interactions with rare instances of apparent diversity. At the same time, I witnessed the minority students' negotiations to fit in with the rest of the class. The data I collected provided me with clues regarding their self-designed categorization techniques and rationalization for differences within the Canadian society. These clues, which I discuss later, provided interesting glimpses into the actions of students trying to comprehend their country’s growing diversity.

Sara and Dealing with Difference:

In many ways, Sara and I are mirroring images of each other – similar reflections yet opposites. Both of us are minorities; Sara is an invisible minority, me, visible. Both of us are teachers; Sara is close to retirement; I am just beginning my career. Both of us have experienced racism in Lakeville; Sara has faced overt racism; mine has been subtle. Both of us believe in discussing diversity in the classroom yet our approaches are different. Because of our similarities, Sara and I were often in agreement regarding each other’s practices and beliefs; however, sometimes we were not. Before discussing my experiences in the classroom, I think it is important to fully describe Sara’s approach to diversity. Her attitudes and experiences helped construct the context of my experiences in her classroom and relationship with the students.

Comfortable with Difference:

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting educator, Peggy McIntosh. As she discussed her personal discovery of “White privilege” (McIntosh, 1990), she reflected, “The teacher is the most important presence in the classroom as he or she decides how difference will be treated” (Field notes, May 18, 1999). Numerous other educators share McIntosh’s statement who have noted the relationship between a teacher’s attitude to difference and how that difference is played out (Cameron & Varma, 1997; Cummins, 1996; Feuerverger, 1994; Kehoe, 1983;
Sleeter, 1995; Wolcott, 1982). Sara is a living example of how the relationship with our personal identity can affect who we are in the classroom and who we allow others to be.

If there is one thing to be said about Sara and difference is that she is very comfortable with who she is. Throughout my two years in Sara’s class, she spoke very candidly about being Jewish to both her students and me. When we discussed this, Sara cited her daughter as her incentive to fight for equality. Sara noted, “I have a young daughter who’s already been told that she’s disliked because she is a Jew and I can’t walk with blinders. You just can’t. I’m Jewish, I’m sorry if you don’t like it. That’s your prerogative.”

Her direct approach has taken a long time in its formation. For Sara, being a Jewish teacher meant that she was not always able to discuss her views on racism and identity with her students. During one of our interviews, Sara remembered the reactions of different parents:

S: Sometimes parents would get upset. They would think, “Fine, you’re a Jew and we’ll put up with you but don’t talk about what you are in the classroom. Don’t let my son or daughter hear what you are.”...Being Jewish, I have had parents drop into my classroom to see, and I quote, “What the Jew looks like.”

MV: This was said to you?

S: This was said to me. This was at the beginning of my teaching and it was at “Meet the Teacher Night.” I had parents in the room and a lady came to the door, I asked her to come in and she said, “No thanks. I just wanted to see what the Jew looked like.” I have walked into my classroom and found swastikas on my board, I have been called a “dirty Jew.”

MV: And who has done this, students or staff members?

S: Students have said it outright, not directly to me but within earshot. The boys who recently said it, I didn’t even teach. So I think it was something they said because they knew I was Jewish and it was the “in” thing to say.

Once, I walked into the staff room and two French teachers made comments. One lady said, in French, “The g.d. Jew.” I sat down between the two ladies who were talking and literally snuggled in between them, and said, “Don’t worry ladies, you have to be born with it, it doesn’t rub off.” I guess at that point, they must have realized that I do understand French. (Interview, December 3, 1997)

Sara has also experienced problems with the school district and the Department of Education:

S: When I was first hired on to the district, there was only 2 other Jewish teachers in Lakeville. I was hired and J ________ was hired at the same time. When I first started teaching and I wanted to observe the Jewish high holidays, I was docked my salary. This went on until a grievance went in and a
superintendent signed the grievance. Then I received my salary. (Interview, February 3, 1998)

The most recent incident where Sara felt that her identity came into the classroom occurred when a colleague was accused of promoting anti-Semitism. Although the incident saddened her, Sara approached the subject matter-of-factly:

S: Of course, you had to ask, "Did he really say these things?" It's hard when you've worked with a colleague and you never knew anything, there was no indication... and then out of the clear blue...

I guess the biggest issue was that he never actually said anything to [the young girl], a friend said to her, "Better not let him know you're a Jew, he hates Jews." She became very agitated and called her dad to come and get her. And that's when it all opened up. When I saw him after that, I saw him in a different light. I didn't see him as a colleague, I saw him as an enemy. When he tried talking to me one night, I was very polite. I told him that I thought that the best thing to do is to ignore one another. You know, he didn't seem to care.

My daughter has asked me, "Mummy, why is that man causing so much trouble, what did he do?" We've told her what he has said, what he has written. When she asked us why, both mom and I told her we don't know why. Just as we believe certain things, this gentleman believes certain things and he thinks he is right. Well history has proven he is wrong. The statistics are there, it was not just 6 million Jews, others died as well. You could have been Jewish, you could have been crippled, you could have dark hair, brown eyes, whatever. If Hitler didn't like you, it was game over. (Interview, December 3, 1997)

Unfortunately, the school is not the only location where Sara has had to fight the battle of discrimination. During the adoption process of her daughter (something she was open about, even with her students), Sara discovered that racism was alive and overt in New Brunswick:

S: I adopted my daughter but I had to fight for 10 years. I received letters at various stages of the adoption. The one that hit home was one that said, "We don't mean to discourage you but because you are Jewish, you are going to find it very difficult." This was in print and signed. When my lawyer called this person about the letter, she said she did not mean for it to sound discriminatory. She meant that there were very few Jewish children and, at the time, no Jewish children up for adoption. Well that would have been fine if I'd asked for a Jewish baby but nowhere in any of the forms that I had filled out, nowhere in any of the interviews had I asked for a Jewish child. I had asked for a normal, healthy child. That's all I asked for. (Interview, January 10, 1998)

Sara eventually had to approach the New Brunswick Human Rights Council in her successful quest to adopt a baby.

Although the past incidents have been painful, Sara believes that experiencing them has made her a better parent, teacher and person. For example, during my first year in Sara's class, she had to handle her daughter's first experience with overt racism:
S: Recently, was the first time she [June] has ever been faced with, "I don't like you because you are a Jew." She grabbed the bull by the horns and told the young boy that she didn't like it, she did not appreciate what he was saying. He turned around and said, "Fine then I don't like you because you are you." She took the matter herself to the principal and proceeded to tell him what had happened. She also told him that she had been threatened if she told anyone, word would get around that she was a thief. She handled it very well; she told the principal that she did not have to steal that she had everything that she needed.

The little boy who told her that he didn't like her because she is a Jew is a Jehovah Witness, which made it so peculiar because of what they go through and the tolerance that our school has shown them. So I was very shocked to hear that this came from a boy with his background. When I asked my daughter that night what she had learned from the experience, she said to me, "I will always consider him a friend but I know that I can't always trust him." I thought that was a pretty hard lesson for a little 9-year-old to learn.

We went to the synagogue on the following morning on the Sabbath and she told the president about what had happened. He looked at her and said, "[June], we have fought many battles, your mother has been called a dirty Jew all her life, this is another battle we have to fight." She said, "Yesterday, when I came into my mother's room crying about it, my mother said to me, "[June], remember Moses parted the Red Sea and who won. And she said to me the same thing you did, this is a battle but we'll win the war." Hopefully, as her years go on, she won't have to deal with this as much. We have never hidden from [June] that we are Jewish, of course. We've tried to answer all her questions such as "Mummy, does that mean because I'm Jewish no one is ever going to like me?" (Interview, December 3, 1997).

While Sara admitted that her child sometimes asked difficult questions, she also noted that it was better to ask than to be ashamed of one's own identity. She expressed the belief that hurtful experiences have the potential to make people more sensitive to others:

S: Her questions are sometimes very hard because it brings back my own childhood, coming home from school, being knocked in the face by one particular lady. Hopefully, by giving her the answers, or trying to give her the answers, it will also broaden her outlook on things. And if she is aware of the troubles that being a Jew may present to her then she will be more tolerant of others in similar situations. (Interview, December 3, 1997)

Sara approaches issues of diversity with her students in a manner similar to that with her daughter; she is direct and honest. For example, on the first day of every new school year she always explains to the class her Jewish identity and the implications that her background will have on the classroom. Mainly this means that she will take certain days off for religious holidays and that these days mean the same to her as days such as Christmas mean to the
students. This does however, sometimes cause questions. On one level, Sara appeared amused by her students' queries:

S: They ask me where I'm from, if I'm Canadian, if my daughter is Jewish. Naïve questions like that. They [the questions] don't offend me; they just don't know anything different than what they are. Sometimes they ask questions because they are concerned. For example, every year, somebody asks me if I will have to work during Christmas break or if it is o.k. to bring me a Christmas present, which of course it is. At other times, they're just curious and want to know things such as what my family does during our holidays. (Interview, December 3, 1997)

On the other hand, Sara made sure that her students had a clear comprehension of her views on prejudice:

S: I make it very clear. They know that if I hear them say one mean thing, they're in big trouble. And it won't be the principal calling their parents. It will be me!

MV: What do you do when you hear a student make a stereotypical remark?

S: It’s interesting that you ask me this because I just had this discussion with a friend. She pointed out to me that I make a lot of positive stereotypical remarks. For example, I mentioned to her how smart you are and then made a connection to your race. That's still stereotyping isn't it. When I hear my students make a negative one, I always get angry with them. Sometimes I ask them to prove it and of course they can't. It depends on the severity of the remark. I would never let a comment like, “Natives are lazy” pass by but I may not say anything if a student said something like “Chinese people are hard workers.” I will have to watch myself on that.

MV: Is teaching about diversity and stereotypes your responsibility?

S: It’s everyone’s responsibility. Maybe if more people saw this we wouldn’t have racial problems.

MV: Do you feel that you have a moral obligation to discuss issues of tolerance? If so, does this obligation spring from your role as a teacher or from being Jewish?

S: This springs from my role as a human being. This is everyone’s responsibility perhaps if everyone met this obligation then teachers wouldn’t have to worry about making it part of our curriculum. (Interview, December 3, 1997)

Perhaps, indeed.

It isn’t Always Easy:
Although Sara was always completely forthright in her stance against racism as well as dedicated to teaching with diversity in mind, this did not mean that uncomfortable episodes never occurred. The following entry demonstrates how hard Sara worked to accommodate her students and yet how easily someone could be left out.

Despite the fact that I had only thus far made a few visits to Sara's classroom, I could tell that something different was in the air. The class felt light and giddy as if everyone was looking forward to something special. I was not too far off the mark. With a huge smile, Ying (a recent immigrant from China) informed me that it was Christmas today. I asked him what that meant but he wasn't sure.

The morning passes in the festive atmosphere and in the afternoon the students return with the same sense of excitement that they had exhibited earlier. Groups of students clustered in different parts of the classroom are chatting amongst themselves. Standing by her desk, Sara pointedly looks at her watch and places her hand in the air. Four other hands go up. Sara then exclaims in a loud voice, "I believe the bell rang five minutes ago." Silence. Everyone returns quickly to his or her desk and Sara's expression instantly changes from frustration to pleasure.

Having the class's attention, Sara walks over to a branch planted in a plastic bucket of pebbles. The branch has been painted silver and is adorned with various ornaments both handmade and commercial. Figures of Santa Claus, snowflakes, menorahs, Star of David, and snowmen are just a few of the items hanging from the branch. This is obviously their Christmas tree. On the floor surrounding the plastic bucket are presents of different shapes and colours. Suddenly it dawns on me; I am witnessing the annual presents-for-the-teacher party.

Sara instructs the class to join her at the tree and they do so in a quiet and orderly fashion. Taking the chair by the tree, she asks her students if they know what Hanukkah is. A few hands go up and slowly the students piece together the answer that it is a Jewish holiday that their teacher celebrates. One student knows that it "has something to do with candles." Sara then asks if they remember Moses coming down the hill. This seems to be familiar to everyone but Ying who is looking confused. For the next thirty minutes Sara's lesson ranges from the price of the candles that they need to order from Montreal because they are unavailable in Lakeville to the fact that most Jewish people also have a Jewish name. Finally Sara minimizes the difference between Christmas and Hanukkah to a matter of calendar dates. Surprisingly, the students do not seem bothered by the extent of Sara's lecture but neither do they ask any questions. I am beginning to think I am the only person anxious to get the gift opening underway.

Finally, Sara leans down and picks up a gift; she takes the time to comment on the careful wrapping. It is a ceramic sculptor of a pair of hands holding a dove. The gift-giver informs Sara that this is "God's bird." Sara then chooses a gift by the Pixies. My attention is caught as I wait for someone to ask

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5 The Pixies seemed to refer to some type of religious belief system. Sara had little information on this and as the student was not forthcoming, I chose not to pry with my own questions.
what a Pixie is or for Sara to explain. Neither happens. The next gift is wrapped in paper that is covered with menorahs. Sara points this out and asks the student where she found it. The student does not know but excitedly assures Sara that she will find out. Another student hands Sara a Hanukkah card and a huge candle. Sara tells him that she will burn this candle at her big Hanukkah dinner. The student is visibly pleased. The rest are a mix of Christmas and Hanukkah gifts and Sara takes the time to comment on each. Once the gifts are opened, Sara hands a Merry Christmas pencil to each student and sends them to their desks to make Christmas cards. (Field notes, December 18, 1997)

Ying’s reaction occurred after the gifts were opened and everyone had returned to their seats.

Sara and I are talking about the Pixies when Ying hesitantly approaches us. Sara briskly tells him to speak if he has a comment or go back to his seat. He then asks her if he can bring a present next year, as he was not aware of the need to bring presents. Sara quietly explains to him that a present is not necessary and is really for people who celebrate Christmas (which doesn’t make sense to me since she doesn’t celebrate Christmas). A student from another class, who invites them to join his class for a Christmas movie, interrupts their conversation. Every head turns to Sara and she nods her consent. Everyone leaves except for Ying who says that he doesn’t feel like a movie.

Sara continues working as I watch Ying approach Mrs. Johnson, the teacher’s assistant. They talk briefly and then she jots something on a scrap of paper and hands him the note and a piece of construction paper. Almost an hour later, Ying walks up to Sara and hands her a card. She reads it, hugs him, and asks him if he would like to join the others. He happily runs to the other class. I notice that Sara does not yell after him to walk. A moment later, Sara brings me the piece of construction paper. It has been transformed into a beautiful picture artistically decorated with many of the images that hang from their tree. At the bottom is the carefully copied message, “Thank you for teaching me,” Sara is silent as she carefully tapes the paper to the front of her desk. In all the years that I have known Sara, this is the first time that I have seen her speechless. (Field notes, December 18, 1997)

When we returned after the Christmas break, Sara and I both discovered that Ying still felt that he had not done enough.

The first day back! As soon as he enters the class, Ying hands Sara a gift. She calls everyone to attention and then opens the gift. I find myself holding my breath, hoping it is appropriate and won’t lead to any teasing by the students. It is a delicate Chinese silk scarf. Oohs and aahs fill the classroom. Sara talks about the two scarves that she has received this year from students. She mentions how the other scarf was admired at the Synagogue and comments that she cannot wait to wear this new one. She then asks Ying to get some information on Chinese New Year, which he agrees to do. (Field notes, January 5, 1998)

I decided to include the above story as it illustrates the complexity of our working with diversity. Sara encouraged the students to celebrate Christmas even though she herself did not
acknowledge the holiday. Yet her attempts to accommodate the majority of her students’ beliefs led to the exclusion of at least one student, a student who had not been in Canada long enough to be familiar with Christmas. Sadly, Ying felt the same sense of alienation that Sara told me about feeling when she was the only child in her class that did not celebrate Christmas. This episode is not a criticism of Sara’s teaching but rather a comment on how working with diversity, however limited, requires constant critical thinking of how we operate in our classroom.

**Becoming Part of the Classroom – A Formal Beginning:**

After making several visits to Sara’s classroom, I began my formal interaction with the students in January, 1998. Sara and I decided upon this date together as we felt it was a time of new beginnings, which would naturally accommodate my new role in the classroom. The first two months of my time in Sara’s classroom was spent on trying to ascertain portraits of what the students saw as the Canadian. During this time I read to the students periodically as they believed that I was there to do a reading project, an expectation that normalized my later reading relationship with them. I was extremely careful not to read any texts from my own personal multicultural text set, as I did not want to sway my students’ thoughts in any manner. Even when Sara suggested I read one of her multicultural-labeled books, I declined and explained my reasons.

Much of what I write about regarding these first two months is meant to present an image of the classroom, my participants and their notions of a Canadian. Through discussion of the various tasks, as well as their stories and interview segments, my hope is that a reader will come to have an understanding of my participants and their comprehension of diversity. Only by obtaining an awareness of what my participants initially believed about Canada and being a Canadian, could anyone appreciate the impact that the texts did or did not have on their image of the Canadian. I then describe my time until the end of the school year (approximately three months), the different texts used and my participants various reactions to them.

**Critical Reading Group Meetings:**

The beginning of the new term was also the start of my critical reading group meetings -- in-depth conversations with the four pre-selected grade 4 students. During our early meeting in January and February, I simply asked a different student to choose a text from Sara’s reading table, which we would use for the basis of our discussion. I did this because, first, I wanted the four students to develop a sense of ownership and control with the group. However, I also knew that none of the books on Sara’s table fell into my definition of multicultural literature.
(see chapter 1) and therefore would not influence their notion of a Canadian. During our sessions we would discuss such aspects as plot, character development, illustrations, or whatever else struck the students as interesting.

On occasions in which the class had participated in an exercise on Canadians, for example the ABC book described later in this chapter, I would find a way to include the lesson in our meetings. This may be done, for example, by comparing what the students had produced to other alphabet books. While a large part of our interviews often focused on different aspects of reading, some of their comments were significant indicators of what they believed to be Canadian and contributed to the beginning of my data collection.

Once I began using the multicultural texts, this group allowed me the opportunity for a greater exploration of the multicultural genre. I achieved this by using books not introduced in the whole-class session. Finding the smaller group more manageable, I was able to really mine the four students’ feelings about the extra books. Also, we were able to examine all of the texts on a critical, more analytical manner. Their observations and struggles provided the perfect foil for the whole-class sessions in which the texts were approached in a non-critical manner. As I describe later, the results are quite noteworthy in their difference and present questions regarding pedagogical practices for any type of diversity education.

Looking For the Canadian:

During my first two months of research, I relied on a variety of information sources to help me ascertain what my participants believed to be “Canadian.” My query was not just who could be a Canadian but also who could not be Canadian, and why or why not. I collected data on student’s thoughts through five primary methods: Sara’s observations, the critical reading group, classroom tasks, text reactions, and general observations. Each source provided different data, which either complemented or challenged previously-gathered information. Also, I tried to link the critical reading group meetings with the classroom tasks and texts in order to solidify my theories. In other words, all sources became useful means of triangulation (see Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994).

The data is presented in chronological order mapping out a two-year journey in Sara’s classroom. This presentation style unfolds the map of where my students were located in their thinking regarding Canadian ethnic diversity, guides us through their development of thought demonstrated towards diversity, highlights major movements in attitudes towards what is and is not a Canadian, and marks the various final destinations of various students. Moreover, the
presentation technique also helps signify where changes were not so quick to happen and perhaps suggests why.

What Does the Teacher Say?

Not only was Sara the central figure in her classroom but she also had spent a lot of time living and thinking about diversity. Consequently, she became my most immediate source of data. I did not realize this until I had transcribed my interviews but I had actually questioned Sara several times on her opinion of what the students saw as Canadian. Sometimes I was very direct:

MV: How do you think your students define the Canadian citizen?

S: White, Anglo-Saxon...they look just like them. You confuse them; they still don’t know how you got here. They ask me, where is she [me] from? I tell them here. They respond with, “But where is she really, really from?” Then they wanted to know what your parents look like. I told them that I met your parents once and they are of average height, they look like her. I asked them, “What is the difference?” And they say, “Oh it doesn’t make any difference, we just want to know.” They still find it difficult to understand that a Canadian can be something other than them. Really, it is both amusing and frightening. (Interview, December 3, 1997)

At other times, Sara provided me with her insights indirectly. Her comments indicate that although she was aware of how limitations of her students’ definition of the Canadian, she maintained a vigilant effort to open them up to new ideas as well as challenge their preconceived assumptions:

MV: You’ve told me that at the beginning of the year the students often ask where you’re from. Can you elaborate on that?

S: They think that when you say that you’re Jewish, Chinese, or whatever that you’re from somewhere else...that you have to come from a different country. The stereotype Jew, and believe me stereotype, lots of money, short, fat, big nose, and an accent. We’re fat because we eat good food and by that I mean fatty foods, we’re always partying.

But children have the idea that if you are a different religion than them, you have to come from somewhere else. I explain to them, that I was born and raised here, Lakeville. And then they think, you can’t be Jewish, because they don’t belong here. We talk about this in the class; just because you’re Jewish or Baptist, or whatever, doesn’t mean you’re not Canadian, that you have to be born elsewhere.

MV: Do you think they get the message?

S: Yes, I think so. Some still feel that in order to be Canadian you have to look like them. I think that stems from the home. I really believe there are still bigots
out there. I can be nice to you and sit next to you but I always have an excuse when you invite me to your home and I never invite you to my home. But when we meet in public, I'm always nice to you but don't call to ask me to take my daughter out. Very often people believe that unless you're White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, you're not Canadian.

MV: Are your students ready for a multicultural country?

S: Some are. Some have traveled quite a bit already and they understand that the world is different. But are they ready for this difference to be in their own back yard? Well that's a different question. You have to remember that this is not Toronto. They look around and they see themselves. To them this is Canada. They need more exposure. For instance, they understand class differences because [this school] has students from different economic backgrounds. They see that Johnny has a designer jacket but Sue cannot buy a hot lunch. So they have sympathy for this. But race is not something they have experienced.

MV: How can we get them ready for a multicultural country?

S: Well I think part of it will be serendipity. They may leave here to work elsewhere, places that are more diverse such as Vancouver. Computers are really opening up the world and they will meet different people that way as well. I think you just have to be on guard, watch what they say and if they say something racist, I say, "excuse me but whom do you think you are believing something like that!" (Interview, January 10, 1998)

Sara was also very helpful by informing me of comments students made in my absence. The following are examples that she provided during different interviews:

S: We had a guest speaker in one of the days when you were not here, to speak about conflict resolution. So, he had an English accent and when he left the students wanted to know where he was from.

MV: What did you say?

S: Well, it took me by surprise. I hadn't really thought about it. I know a lot of people that grew up somewhere in England but now live here. So I told them, "Well I'm not sure where he's from but he talked about his experiences in other [local] schools so I would guess that he has been living here for at least the last few years.

MV: So you think they felt he was different because he sounded different?

S: Definitely. If he hadn't had an accent, or should I say an English accent, I guess we all have an accent, well they would have just expected him to be Canadian, no questions. (Interview, April 15, 1998)

On another occasion:
S: I have really started to notice things that seem so obvious now but I’m afraid I would have let pass before.

MV: What sort of things?

S: Well, Tuesday, yes Tuesday, Monica and I were discussing a book. I was trying to show her clues that can provide you with information about a book even before you read it. Traits like readability, book length, illustrations, you know the list. Well, we turned to the cover because, as you know, you really can tell a lot from the cover. Well, at the bottom was a maple leaf, so I handed the book to her and said, “I know this book is written by a Canadian author, can you tell me how I know this?” She looked at the book, front and back, flipped through the pages and then said to me in a tentative voice, “The author is Canadian?” She then showed me the picture of the author on the back cover and there is this white face all smiles. She didn’t even notice the maple leaf!

MV: Do you think that she was relying on skin colour? Isn’t it possible that she knows this particular author?

S: Monica is part of my whipped cream group – sweet yet thick. She’s not a reader and the chances of her connecting the author of one book to another are pretty slim. No, I’m convinced it was because the author is white. (Interview, May 12, 1998)

Despite the fact that Sara had consciously worked to bring issues of diversity to the classroom, she recognized the challenge of working against various dominant forces that continually reinforced the concept that Canadian equated White Anglo-Saxon. Because so much of her attention towards diversity was directed by a vested interest produced by her personal experiences, I was left wondering if a White teacher unaware of the rages of racism would be as forthright and determined as Sara.

Asking the Students:

As I noted in my discussion on methodology, although data was collected by both quantitative and qualitative means, the emphasis was on a qualitative mindset. A substantial amount of primary data was collected through a series of student tasks. Results from these tasks were then compared to what the students said during interviews, classroom discussions, and text reviews. The following is a description of the most significant exercises in which the students participated. Each one contributes to an understanding of what the students perceived to be Canadian. In chapter 7, a revisiting of the tasks demonstrates how far multicultural children’s literature took my participants in their journey understanding.

The ABCs of Being Canadian:
The first activity that I used for data collection was based on the concept of a theme-based alphabet book. I decided upon this exercise because of the number of alphabet books that I had seen about Canada. So many of them depicted Canadians as white with only a cursory glance at diversity with entries such as, I is for Indian. For our book, each student was given a letter and told to identify the letter with a word that not only began with their given letter but also represented Canada in some manner. Furthermore, the students had to write a sentence explaining how their word was associated with Canada. Students were then given the following example: L is for Laurence. Margaret Laurence is a Canadian author. Many of her novels are set in Canada. They were also provided with the example, D is for different. Different people from around the world live in Canada. I was somewhat hesitant to use the latter example as I did not want to prejudice the students' thinking towards an inclination for difference. Their work proved my fears to be unfounded. The following are examples of the students' sentences:

F is for farms and farming. I picked farms because my grandparents own a farm and I like to visit them.

S is for snow. We get a lot of snow in Canada. In the last storm me and my sister made the biggest snowman on my street.

T is for tough. My dad says that our ancestors had to be tough when they first came to Canada.

W is for winter. Many people in Canada enjoy winter sports such as skating and skiing. My family goes skiing every Christmas (Field notes, January 8, 1998).

After surveying their entries, I discovered an interesting trend. Many of the students relied on images that they could personally associate with. What made their entries especially interesting was the fact that of the twenty students who chose words associated with their personal experience, fifteen linked the words to their family. This, to me, suggested a sense of history and kinship with Canada. In other words, their Canada included their personal relation to the country.

The proposition that my participants saw Canada in their own image was further strengthened by the entries of the two immigrant students, Michael and Ying. Michael's page read, "P is for province. Canada has ten provinces" (Field notes, January 8, 1998). Unlike his classmates, Michael did not have a long history with Canada. Instead of relying on a personal or family connection, his entry seemed to reflect Sara's social studies lessons on Canada.
Ying’s entries were of particular interest. I say entries because Ying misunderstood the instructions and believed that he had to do the entire twenty-six pages on his own. By the time we discovered the misinterpretation, Ying had written four pages. Ying’s misfortune became my fortune as his words provided my research with extra data. Similar to Michael’s work, each of Ying’s four pages reflected a Canada to which he was not personally connected but rather had discovered mainly in the classroom:

P is for potato salad. Canadians like to eat potato salad at Christmas time.

T is for thanksgiving. At thanksgiving, Canadians eat a lot of turkey.

S is for Santa Claus. Santa Claus gives toys to children.

M is for money. Canada has a lot of money (Field notes, January 8, 1998).

I have some idea about from where Ying’s beliefs derived. Thanksgiving, for example, had been the focus of discussion earlier in the year. Similarly, attention to Santa Claus had occupied class time for weeks leading up to Christmas. Although Thanksgiving and Christmas were key dates on the school calendar, they had no meaning for Ying and his family. Yet he seemed to perceive them as important enough to represent the Canadian experience.

His belief regarding potato salad was also probably connected to school. As the following field notes indicate, Ying had a very significant memory attached to this particular food:

To celebrate Christmas break, Sara and the class are having a class lunch. Although there wasn’t any obligation to do so, many of the students contributed to the buffet. As a result, a long table stands at the front of the room laden with all sorts of goodies. I notice Sara talking to Ying who, unlike the other students, has an empty plate on his desk. Taking him by the hand, Sara walks Ying over to the table and begins to point out different items. I am assuming that Ying’s parents only cook their own familiar foods at home. Ying looks at each and shakes his head. Finally, Sara exclaims in a loud voice, “For god sakes, Ying, it’s potato salad. Everyone likes potato salad; just try it!” The pair has almost everyone’s attention as Ying gingerly places a spoon of potato salad in his mouth. He smiles and nods, and the class breaks into spontaneous applause. I have the feeling that such new discoveries have happened before. Ying agrees to take some more salad; the rest of his plate is filled with chips and cookies. (Field notes, December 16, 1997)

Most probably, this was one of the few experiences Ying had with potato salad thus it took on the image of a Canadian Christmas treat. Again his reference to Canada was not based on
something overly familiar to his own world but rather on what he believed to be a component of the reality experienced by his Canadian peers.

To understand the money comment, I asked Ying directly. Unfortunately, Ying slipped into one of his shy moments and simply said, “People in Canada have a lot of money.” He did not elaborate. Although Ying could have chosen essentially anything to describe the Canadian experience, he, like Michael, created entries that were removed from his personal life. A major difference between his and Michael’s sentences is that Michael described something that neither included nor excluded him. His sentence simply stated factual information – Canada has ten provinces. Ying, on the other hand, picked items and events he believed to be characteristic of the Canadian life, characteristics of which he was no part. It appears that the school curriculum he had so far experienced barely reflected his life and did little to include him into the supposed Canadian mosaic. Instead, the greatest impressions made upon him consisted of items and realities that actually excluded him.

Ying’s originally assigned letter was E. With this letter in mind, he eventually wrote, “E is for English. In Canada people speak French and English.” Ironically, because Cantonese is his mother tongue, Ying was essentially excluded from this Canadian entry as well. His entries consistently, and with his own actions, positioned him as the outsider of the Canadian experience.

As the students had to illustrate their pages, I was also able to examine their artwork for clues on their ideas of a Canadian. Since most of the students chose to write something about themselves, their pages were filled with images representative of their familiar world. In other words, their drawings were of white people. However, even in the rare cases where students created entries that were not related to their own lives, their drawn images depicted white Canadian citizens, including those drawn by Ying, a talented artist. Nowhere in the class book was there a suggestion of Canadian pluralism even though the topic of diversity had surfaced in the examples presented to the class.

During my critical reading group meeting, I discussed the alphabet book with the four students. I explained that I wanted them to discuss their entries in reference to the inspirations that had produced their ideas. Like the rest of the class, the critical reading group’s responses indicated that their creative sources derived from their personal history and relationship with Canada.

MV: Chris, I noticed that you have the letter “G;” what did you write?
Chris: I said, “G is for goalie in hockey. Hockey is a Canadian game and I am a goalie on my hockey team.”

MV: Why did you write that?

Chris: Because I am. I don’t know, it makes sense, doesn’t it?

MV: Of course it does. Lisa, what did you write?

Lisa: I wrote, “F is for farms and farming. I chose farms because my grandparents own a farm and I like to visit them.”

MV: And why did you write that?

Lisa: I just told you. That’s it.

MV: Are farms Canadian?


MV: Barb, David, what about you two?

Barb: “R is for Robert Munsch, a Canadian author. My favourite story is Get Me Another One because my mom is from Newfoundland.”

David: “L is for loonie. In Canada a loonie is a coin which means a dollar.”

MV: That’s very good. L would have been hard for me.

David: I just thought of it.

MV: What did you draw?

David: I drew two people in the Dollar Store.

Barb: They’ll need more than a loonie. There’s tax too you know.

David: I know. The girl has a quarter. See there. (Interview, January 8, 1998)

Although the members of my critical reading group had different reasons for selecting their particular word, three out of four followed the pattern of the whole class and relied on something personal in their search for Canadian words. Furthermore, everyone’s pictures, including David’s who had selected a word not directly connected to him, illustrated a world populated with Caucasian-looking figures. They may have managed to capture Canada’s tax
reality in their alphabet book but, similar to the rest of the class, evidence of visible diversity was not present.

Considering the context, I somewhat expected the students to create entries and illustrations reflective of their Anglo-Saxon society. Their examples solidified the contention made by various educators (Banks, 1989; Citron, 1971; Macphee, 1997) who argue that children growing up in “ethnically-encapsulated” (Banks, 1989) environments tend to perceive society as a mirror image of their own immediate reality. Consequently, “as the white child grows, he gradually assumes an unconscious feeling of white dominance. He orients himself in a white-centric world. The white self is felt as the human norm, the right, against which all persons of other color may be judged” (Citron, 1971:6).

Although the data from the ABC book did not surprise me, it did yield a greater question regarding the presence of diversity. Given the predominately-white characteristics of their world, were these students even aware of racial and ethnic diversity? If they were, to what identity did they assign these differences; how did they explain the presence of diversity? To not acknowledge diversity is one issue. To recognize diversity and delegate it to a specific category is another issue. Understanding the framework within which they situated diversity would provide a clearer interpretation of what is and is not Canadian. The ensuing tasks were therefore designed to not only capture an image of the Canadian but also address the presence of diversity.

Create a Character:

Create a Character was the first activity meant to measure students’ reactions to individuals from various backgrounds. For this assignment, students were provided magazine pictures of Canadian individuals of different racial backgrounds. As I had chosen the pictures, I knew that all of the photographed individuals were Canadian; my participants were not privy to this information. In fact, the only information that they were given was the actual picture itself. The pictures were mainly head shots, as I did not want any visual background noise to influence my participants’ thinking. The photos were randomly distributed and students were asked use their picture to create a character for a future book. As part of the assignment, they had to produce a biography of their character, including information such as the individual’s birthplace. Later, I examined the pictures for dominant patterns or trends. The results were revealing in their clarity.

All of the children who had pictures of a white person, assigned their character with either a Canadian, American or British identity. In contrast, every child who had a picture of a
visible minority cast their character as either an immigrant or citizen of another country. Furthermore, several members of the latter group created outrageous names for their characters making them appear exotic and bizarre. Although it is impossible for the reader to see the whole and accurate picture with only a few examples, the following specimens do provide hints to the overall class assumptions regarding difference:

*Picture of a Japanese-Canadian girl:*

She’s not from Canada. She’s from China or Japan. Her name is Zan, Tan, Yan. She always eats Chinese food. She likes flying a kite all the time and playing all of the time. She has long black hair. She wears a dress with a ribbon around her waist. She’s from a small family and town. She has china toys like a bell ringer. She doesn’t have Barbie dolls or Sailor Moon dolls or a bike. Her parents have to go out and get food for her family and village. I wouldn’t like to be friends with Zan, Tan, Yan because she lives at the other side of this planet. I picked China because she is Chinese. (grade 4 male)

*Picture of a Chinese-Canadian girl:*

Name: Aloira I. Smobaxes  
Place of Birth: Nassau, Bahamas  
Present Location: Cairo, Egypt  
Work: Marine Biologist  
Hair Colour: Brown  
Eye Colour: Blue Brown  
Children: 1  
Main Interest: Alligators (Nile type)  
Hours of Work a Day: 12 hours  
Age: 23  
I picked the Bahamas because it is where my parents honeymooned and I always liked Egypt. I would like to be friends because she is smart. (grade 5 female)

*Picture of an African-Canadian Man:*

Hi my name is _____ and I am an author. This is my character Pato. This is his mug shot. His crime is selling drugs. In my story he doesn’t go to jail because he wants to make a deal with the cops. He is 26 years old so he has been selling drugs for a long time. He has a shady past. He was born in Cuba but sneaked over here in a boat when he was a kid. No one knows anything about his childhood. Will he make a deal with the cops? Maybe. Read my book and see. I picked Cuba because he looks like he is from Cuba and a lot of drug dealers come from Cuba. It would not be safe to be friends with Pato. (grade 5 male)

*Picture of a white Canadian man:*

The name of this person that is having a good time is Buddy Smith. Halifax is the home of this wild man. Born at the Halifax hospital, he now has a
wild life. This man is one of the best construction workers. When the day is done he loves to go to the beach and go for a swim. This person is a good swimmer, construction work, fisher, and a good hard worker that sweats a lot. I made him born in Halifax because he looks it. This man would be my pal. (grade 5 male)

Since this activity produced several interesting suggestions, Sara and I decided to further develop the activity in hopes of collecting more data regarding the students’ assumptions. The following day, Sara passed the biographies back to the students explaining that she was really pleased with their creativity and wanted them to expand on their characters by answering two questions:

1. How did they decided where their character was from?
2. Would they choose their character for a friend? Why or why not?

While the responses to question two varied and did not appear to be based on racial stereotypes, question one yielded different results. When questioned about their choice of birthplace for their character, 18 out of 22 students stated that their decision was based on the person’s appearance. More specifically, their descriptions were predicated on racial clues projected by the individual’s facial appearance. One student noted, “My character is black, so I had to make him come from Africa;” while another student wrote, “I made my character Japanese because of his eyes” (Field notes, January 13, 1998). Even the two immigrant students from German and China followed this line of thinking, each casting their white character in the role of a Canadian. When I inquired about their two specific choices, their assumptions were no different than the rest of their classmates; for these two students, the characters simply looked Canadian.

Draw Me A...:

In order to triangulate the immigrant vs. the Canadian findings suggested in the Create a Character exercise, I asked Sara to re-enact the Create a Character task in a different form. After some discussion, we devised the Draw Me A... activity. First, we incorporated a lecture on immigrants within a social studies lesson. As students were already studying Canada, the topic of immigrants could be introduced as an apparent and natural part of the theme. The section began with information on First Nations People that the students had to copy. One particular section read, “Aboriginals were the first people to inhabit the land we now call Canada; everyone else came here from somewhere else. These people are called immigrants” (Field notes, January 19, 1998).

While reviewing the paragraph aloud, Sara asked the class to define the term
"immigrant." The students were actually quite knowledgeable of the term and together they created the definition as, "Someone who is born in one country and then moves to another" (Field notes, January 19, 1998). Sara extended the teachable moment by asking the students to suggest reasons as to why they thought a person or family may want to immigrate to Canada. The list was actually produced quite quickly. Without any help from either Sara or myself, the following is a compilation of the motivations for immigration to Canada as imagined by Sara's class:

1. To escape war in your home country
2. To find a job
3. Because you're a refugee
4. To find food
5. To live with family
6. To have more space (land)
7. To start a new religion (Field notes, January 19, 1998)

Armed with their list, Sara then asked the students to draw two pictures: one of an immigrant moving to Canada, the other of the Canadian who would sponsor them (we had already discussed the process of immigrant sponsorship). Similar to the Create a Character activity, results indicated a strong correlation between skin colour and citizenship. Of the twenty-three participating students, all illustrated their Canadian as a white individual. Furthermore, all twenty-three students also depicted their immigrant as a non-white individual.

Two dominant disturbing trends emerged from the gathered research. The first, which I have already identified, was my participants' collective perception of the physical figuration of the immigrant – a non-white individual. This assumption resurfaced in later conversations with the critical reading group who echoed the class's belief that immigrants are identifiable by their skin colour. The following is just one example of their assumptions:

Lisa: Chris wants to ask you ----

Chris: Shut up!

MV: What did you want to ask me Chris?

Chris: Nothing, she's dumb.

Lisa: He wants to know if you're an immigrant.

Chris: I never said that.
MV: It's o.k. What made you think I was an immigrant?

Chris: I don't know...I just...never mind.

MV: It's o.k. to tell me. You must have some reason to think this.

Lisa: It's because, ...don't be offended O.K.? But you're skin is kinda brown.

MV: Do all immigrants have brown skin?

Lisa: Ah, no well black skin too.

Barb: Well, Ying is an immigrant and his skin is not brown, like it's kind of beige.

MV: You're right, Ying is an immigrant. Are there any other immigrants in your class? (after a long silence) What about Michael? He was born in Germany, wouldn't that make him an immigrant?

Lisa: He was? So sort of...he is an immigrant but he speaks English and I don't know he's....

David: You wouldn't guess that Michael is an immigrant.

MV: how come? Ying speaks English.

Lisa: Ya but it's hard to understand Ying sometimes.

Barb: I guess Michael is an immigrant...but I don't know...it's just different.  
(Interview, February 3, 1998)

My initial probe into the students' thoughts on diversity and being a Canadian indicated a relationship between skin colour and identity. While my participants recognized the presence of visible minorities, they did not accord members of such groups the same relationship with the Canadian identity as that conferred to White Canadians. Where White Canadians were seen to hold a clear and long-standing claim to the Canadian identity, non-whites clutched a more tenuous claim and were associated with their primary identity of immigrants rather than Canadians. These results echo various studies on prejudice and young children conducted by other researchers. The reliance on stereotypes, for example, is in keeping with studies by Crump (1986), Goodman (1952) and Gopaul-McNichol (1995), all of whom contend that children not only make racial distinctions but also use such divisions to support stereotypes.
The second unsettling suggestion was the inclination of my participants to believe that citizens in other countries experience only poverty and personal trauma. Therefore the desire to immigrate to Canada is bolstered by the motivation to escape the dangers situated in one’s homeland. This opinion was first apparent in the Create a Character exercise. My participants’ biographies of the non-white individuals were inundated with descriptions of parents searching for food, children lacking toys or clothes, families with more children than they could support and individuals attempting to come to Canada for financial security. These convictions were reiterated in the list compiled by the students regarding the reasons immigrants come to Canada. Each entry on the list portrays the immigrant as arriving in Canada to receive something, whether this is in shape of the tactile, such as money, or of the more abstract, such as freedom. Any suggestion that the immigrant could actually contribute to Canadian society remained silent. Even after I suggested this possible scenario with the example of the number of computer experts coming to Canada to fill open jobs, the students dismissed this example of immigrant contribution by perceiving it as an exception.

The Draw Me A… activity divined similar results. For example, one student drew a small black man with a ball and chain around his ankle. The write-up described him as a 40-year-old African man immigrating to Canada to escape war. In other descriptions of the fictional immigrants, students provided such reasons for immigration as, “because of saving money,” “because of war,” “if she doesn’t move she would die,” and “to get enough money to feed their children” (Field notes, January 19, 1998).

While the benefits of Canadian life cannot be denied, the assumption that most non-Canadians are disadvantaged has problematic ramifications. The most menacing of these include the beliefs that non-Canadians (and potential immigrants) are less educated, more needy, and prone to violence. Situating immigrants in such a role denies the possibility of their contribution to society and fortifies the stereotype that immigrants are a burden to Canada. My participants’ portrayals of the immigrant hinted at the possibility that they subscribe to the popular social belief that immigrants take more than they give to Canadian society (Dyer, 2000).

I attempted to acquire a greater insight into the poverty theme by introducing the issue during a subsequent critical reading group meeting. While the following interview entry is quite lengthy, it highlights several of the assumptions made in the class activity:

MV: O.K. today we’re not going to talk about a book actually. I brought your Create a Character forms. Remember these?
All: yes.

Chris: Mine’s the black dude from Africa. Mumumbo!

Lisa: Mumumbo! That’s funny.

Chris: Not if you’re living in Africa.

MV: Why did you make your character come from Africa?

Chris: Because he’s black and he looks like he’s from Africa. ...he’s a dancer and he lives in a village. At night they dance around the fire and eat soup.

Lisa: You saw that in Ace Ventura.

Chris: No I didn’t. That’s what they all do! Duh. Mumumbo hunts a lot because his father got killed by an elephant and he has to find food for everyone. He has eleven brothers and sisters. He wants to be in the movies to make a lot of money. So he’s been practicing fighting so can be in the movies or in the WWF.

MV: Very interesting. Anything else?

Chris: Oh ya, he’s learning to read because he has to know how to read the script. Well not if he goes into the WWF. That’s it.

MV: David, what’s your character like?

David: I couldn’t tell if mine was Japanese or Chinese so I made her Japanese. Her name is Zan, Tan, Yan. She eats a lot of Chinese food. She has to go out a lot and find food for her family and village.

MV: So she lives in a village?

David: Hmm.

MV: Can she read?

David: I guess so.

Lisa: Mine’s from China. Her name is Ying-Wah. But she lives in Canada now. She’s an immigrant. She’s smart too; she can speak three languages, Chinese, French and English.

MV: What does it mean to be an immigrant?

Lisa: It means that you are born in another country but you move to Canada.

MV: Why would you do that?
Barb: Maybe for food? In other places, people don’t have food.

Lisa: Because of war. There’s tons of wars in other countries.

MV: Why else would you leave your country?

David: For money, like a job.

Chris: Ying is an immigrant.

David: There’s no war in China, is there?

MV: I don’t think so.

Barb: But in China, don’t they like, well I saw a show where they don’t let you do anything in China. If you do something really small that the President doesn’t like, he can send you to jail for your whole life. It would be hard to live there because you would always be worried, like, what if I do this, will I get in trouble?

Chris: Ya, I saw a show about China where they said like if you have a girl baby, you know, instead of a boy, they will kill it. …they kill all of the girls.

Barb: My person’s name is Jon Henderson. He’s from [Lakeville]; he works at the hospital and he’s got a horse.

MV: Barb, everyone else made their person from another country. How come you picked [Lakeville] and Canada?

Barb: He just looked like someone who would live in Canada and I wanted to make him live in [Lakeville]. I don’t…it’s the first thing that came to my mind. Did I do it wrong?

MV: No, I was just asking. (Interview, January 21, 1998)

The conversation with the four participants indicated that their beliefs were reminiscent of the biographies supplied by themselves and their classmates. Moreover, many of the assumptions were absolute in nature in that they referred to the entire population of a country. For example, Chris’s comment, “that’s what they all do” as an explanation for his biography of Mumumbo as well as his belief that all Chinese female babies are killed indicted the inability to see non-Canadians and immigrants as individuals. Barb articulated similar beliefs in her observation that the entire Chinese population fears the government.

My participants’ attitudes on Canadians, immigrants and citizens of other countries may have been predicated on the incapability to classify identities in multiple categorizations. In
her study on young White children living in Montreal, Aboud (1999) found that racist beliefs are significantly high in 5 and 6 year olds but began to decline at the age of 7. Her hypothesis suggests the inability for younger children to utilize multiple classification. Hence, if one black person is bad, they are all bad. While her research poses some interesting questions for my own work, my students were eleven and twelve, significantly older than Aboud's age group.

When I discussed this research with Sara, she offered several suggestions. First, she believed that her students, like the ones she had taught for her entire career, were constantly learning to share information in different categories; this included information on diversity. Secondly, she felt that children from predominately-White locations were socially behind younger children living in more diverse areas:

S: Whatever is new takes time to learn. First I teach addition and then subtraction, not both at the same time. They need to learn one concept before transferring that information into another operation. When my students write for me in September, they write short choppy sentences but by June, the sentences more complex because they can think about a lot more at once. They have only been introduced to diversity. They haven't met enough people to begin to place them in multiple boxes. Hopefully, that's what your books will do, make them think and realize that a black person can be successful and a white person can be a convict. To them if you are white, you fall into the Canadian category. If you're not, sorry, you must be something else. Aboud's study, her kids are in Montreal. They at least see diversity so mentally, in that department, they are ahead of my kids; my kids are in a sense her 5 and 6 year olds. (Interview, February 13, 1998)

I certainly saw evidence of the students' propensity to focus on one characteristic per person. For example, when Sara discussed diversity with her class, the students often provided examples involving Ying, even though there was another Chinese student in the class, Steven. Despite the fact that Ying's English was better than Steven's, the students saw Ying as the immigrant and Steven as the disabled child. Once, when I read a story about a child in a wheelchair, several students made a connection with Steven, despite the fact that his condition was not physical in nature. I asked Sara about this and again she felt it was due to her students' method of categorization:

S: Ying may speak better English, but he looks more Chinese. His eyes are more accentuated, so are his customs and his haircut. A lot of Steven's Chinese characteristics are sort of diminished by his mental disability so the students see him as the disabled child because that sticks out more. Now, if Steven was black, I really believe he would have been the black child first and the disabled one second. My students look at me and see a white Canadian and then I tell them that I'm Jewish and they get confused and question whether or not I am
Canadian. It’s hard for them to see that I am both. Now Michael looks and sounds like their image of a Canadian so they forget he’s an immigrant. (Interview, February 13, 1998).

Sara also believed that media had a big impact on her students’ ideas. Certainly much of their perceptions of other cultures were made in reference to popular media, both in the form of fiction and news coverage. The stereotypical messages provided by media, compounded by the lack of challenge to those stereotypes by school curriculum, could effectively create an identity for a child without even meeting or confirming that particular identity. Clark (1963) made such an observation after comparing racial views between White children in urban and rural sections of Georgia and children attending an all-White school in New York City. He argued, “Attitudes toward Negroes are determined chiefly not by contact with Negroes but by contact with the prevailing attitudes toward Negroes. It is not the Negro child, but the idea of the Negro child that influences children (p. 25). My students may not have had much contact with difference but they had received an abundance of messages of what difference could and could not be. This situation undermines the position that the presence of visible minorities is a prerequisite for cross-cultural understanding and racist beliefs. On the contrary, it asserts the suggestion that all people carry ideas of diversity that influences how they react to the various forms of difference in their environment. Given this, it becomes apparent that students, and people in general, are receiving messages regarding diversity regardless of where they live. To ignore these messages or to dismiss them as trivial leaves prejudicial ideas unchallenged and allows space for the proliferation of racist beliefs.

Rating History:

Once I had established a visual image of what my students believed to be Canadian as well as how they explained diversity, I felt it was important to also have an understanding of their reflections on various groups’ contributions and challenges in Canada. In other words, once they accepted that people of a variety of backgrounds do indeed live in Canada (in whatever form of identity), how valuable did they judge such a presence to be? I already had evidence that the students believed that immigrants were an entity separate from their own lives and had come to Canada to secure something unattainable in their own country. However, what thoughts did they have about minority groups after they had entered Canada?

To gain insight into this question, I asked my participants to judge the importance of various Canadian events in an activity, which I labeled, “Rating History.” The exercise consisted of a list of twenty events from which students were asked to choose ten and rate them
in order of importance. It was expected that various influences including the media, family, learned curriculum, and as well as plain guessing would condition the answers. Given these forces, I still believed that the list would provide some insight into what was considered important to Canada from the point of view of the participants. The list consisted of the following events:

1. “Oh Canada” is written
2. First Canadian money is produced
3. Residential schools open for Native Children
4. Woman are allowed to vote
5. Expulsion of the Acadians
6. WW I begins
7. WW II begins
8. Underground railroad to Canada is running
9. First TV show airs
10. Chinese workers come to Canada to work on the railroad
11. Donovan Bailey wins an Olympic gold medal
12. Canada fights against land mines
13. The Vietnamese boat people arrive in Canada
14. Irish immigrants arrive in Canada to escape the potato famine in Ireland
15. Slavery is outlawed
16. Canada gets its own flag – the Maple Leaf
17. [The students’ province] becomes one of the founding provinces of Canada
18. Natives are allowed to vote
19. Kim Campbell becomes the first female Prime Minister
20. Canadian John McCrae writes In Flanders Field.

Sara initiated the exercise by first briefly explaining each event in a manner that made them seem as equal as possible. Her history lesson was in itself educative in that I was able to observe the students’ responses to the various events. For example, several students felt a mistake had been made with # 15, slavery is outlawed. They expressed confusion over the impossibility to outlaw something that had never been legal; they did not believe slavery had ever existed in Canada. Students were familiar with stories involving the Underground Railroad (successfully advertised by the Heritage Minutes) and felt this was in contradiction with a Canadian slave trade. Consequently, the students received a quick history lesson on
slavery in Canada. They were shocked to learn that many slaves had been brought into Canada through the Maritime city of Halifax, a location familiar to them. They also expressed disbelief that at one time neither women nor Natives could vote. Such blatant inequalities seem to strike at the students’ collective sense of justice, flying in contradiction to what they saw as normal.

As Sara described such hardships as the reality of the Chinese workers, the poverty of the Irish immigrants, and the plight of the Acadians, the students’ exasperation and concern could be discerned through such comments as “that’s not fair” and “that’s horrible.” Given the reactions to their new discoveries, I expected the students to pay extra attention to these events during their evaluation. As the following chart indicates, when it came to choosing the top ten events, the issue of injustice appeared to become secondary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection of Events</th>
<th># of Votes as a top 10 event (out of 23)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[the students’ province] becomes one of the founding provinces of Canada</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Oh Canada” is written</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donovan Bailey wins an Olympic gold medal</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada gets its own flag – the Maple Leaf</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian John McCrae writes “In Flanders Field”</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Canadian money is produced</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First TV show airs</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada fights against land mines</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>WW I begins</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WW II begins</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kim Campbell becomes the first female Prime Minister</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women are allowed to vote</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish immigrants arrive in Canada to escape the potato famine in Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Vietnamese boat people arrive in Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of No. 1 Votes (out of the number of times selected)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/23</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/23</td>
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<td>0/1</td>
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</table>

1 The first category lists how many of the 23 participants placed a given event in the top ten. The second category notes how many of times the event was chosen as number 1 in importance.
Residential schools open for Native children 0 0/0
Expulsion of the Acadians 0 0/0
Chinese workers brought in to work on the railroad 0 0/0
Underground railroad is running 0 0/0
Slavery is outlawed 0 0/0
Natives are allowed to vote 0 0/0

Although the students were provided with factual information regarding particular hardships and injustices of the past, and had reacted to it with incredibility, they still failed to see the significance and impact of these events within the Canadian context. Instead, they valued events that responded to symbolism and folklore and elevated their collective identity as Canadians to the top. These included being the fastest runner, a famous poet, a protector, and attaining one’s own anthem and flag. Events that impacted fragments of Canada by seemingly referring to only a particular segment of society were judged as inconsequential in comparison (Field notes, February 11, 1998).

Results of the questionnaire demonstrated a discrepancy between what the students resoundingly voiced as unfair and what they individually judged as significant. This disparity existed even when students clearly held knowledge of a particular event. For example, as I stated earlier, several of the students were aware of Canada’s Underground Railroad. The monumental significance of the secret movement was so impressed upon them that they questioned the existence of slavery in Canada. Yet despite knowledge of this humanitarian and historical action, not one student identified the Underground Railroad as one of the top ten events on the list. Similarly, although the students had studied the Acadian Expulsion in their social studies lessons on the Maritimes, they showed little sympathy for the group. In essence, they demonstrated a greater response to the national symbols of song and flag than to the human victory over racism. The Canada they were part of won Olympic medals and World Wars; experiences of alienation and prejudice lay outside their personal encounters and definition of Canada.

Is This Possible in Today’s World?:

Reviewing the data from the initial exercises and supporting interviews, I was intrigued at the almost absolute nature of the students' beliefs. Is this possible in today's world? I once wrote in my journal, “I know that these students don't spend a lot of time thinking about
diversity, but do they have this little understanding?” (Journal, February 10, 1998) The data from the first set of tasks not only indicated a lack of recognition of the pluralistic nature of Canada but also a stereotypical hold on what little understanding of diversity they did have. I was so surprised by the complete one-sidedness of the data that I began to question the validity of my findings. Sara challenged my concerns. In an interview, Sara expressed her dismay but not disbelief with my initial findings. She noted in a matter-of-fact voice,

These students have very little contact with different people. They see mainly white so they think that all of Canada is white. These results don’t surprise me. What surprises me is that you are surprised. You grew up in this; you know the environment these kids live in. Do you think many of their parents talk about diversity? (Interview, February 14, 2000)

If I were to rely mainly on quantitative data, the possibility of my participants being productive and respectful citizens in a multicultural country would appear bleak. Yet, despite what the numbers indicated, extensive observation and personal interactions with my participants strongly portrayed the students as caring individuals dismayed by instances of injustice and overt racism. During times when Sara shared with them her personal experiences with racism, the students appeared appalled over the possibility of such episodes. They also demonstrated empathy with Ying when she seemed confused or struggling with a problem. One student once said to me, “You talk too fast for Ying to understand. You need to slow down” (Field notes, February 17, 1998). So slow down I did. In lessons related to diversity, the students responded to direct questions in a manner that suggested a perception of Canadians as multiethnic and multiracial. When faced with example of difference among their peers, they seemed to accept such variances as a regular part of the classroom life. Indeed, they reiterated the mosaic view that anyone can enjoy a full connection to the Canadian identity despite their race, religion or language. So from where was the contradiction developing?

The core of this question centers on the presence of critical thought, or in this case, its absence. Although my participants were mainly caring individuals, their defense of racial injustice was mainly mechanical, fueled by their knowledge of politically correct answers. When questioned directly or asked to mark an incident with a right or wrong stamp, the students generally came up with what would be acknowledged as the right answer.

However, when diversity was set in a context where it did not take a prominent space, the previously tutored answers were not so readily recalled. Hence, when students were asked to engage in such tasks as draw a Canadian, their attention was not on diversity and consequently more accurate accounts of their perceptions were collected. Their spontaneous expressions of
Canadianness did not reflect diversity because they mainly failed to have an authentic belief in and understanding of pluralism. Their understanding of multiculturalism was based on a taught response, not on an internal sense of social justice. This situation echoes Freire’s warnings regarding the dangers of banking information in students without the basis of critical thought. The students believed immigrants were non-white and poor because this is the information that they had been fed. When asked to thoughtfully evaluate if immigrants and minorities were a benefit to Canadian society, my participants were at a loss. A curriculum to challenge this stance would have to facilitate in students a critical understanding of the impact of race.

In reference to the tasks, had I first asked the students questions such as, “Do you have to be white to be a Canadian” or “are all immigrants non-white” I truly believe they would have created different pictures. To test out this theory, Sara and I gave an assignment that was first prefaced with a discussion on diversity. In the morning, Sara talked to the class about the advantages of living in a multicultural country like Canada. She then asked the students if they would like to have someone of a different race move into Lakeville. Many noted that they would. That afternoon, Sara distributed the following activity:

There are all sorts of neighbourhoods. Some people like one kind of neighbourhood, while others prefer something else. For example, some people like to live in neighbourhoods full of tall buildings while some like to live in a country neighbourhood. West End is a neighbourhood. Who would live here?

Pretend that you have a house in West End to sell and that you are looking for a family that you would like to live here. What sort of family would that be? Using our imagination, create a family that would fit into the neighbourhood. (Field notes, February 25, 1998)

This time, several students incorporated ideas of diversity in their presentations:

This family used to live in the USA and now moved to Lakeville. They could have different colour skin but they are nice. Their names are Jeff and Fred and Allison. They like pizza and Jeff likes to play soccer (grade 4 male).

There are four people that are going to move in my house. A man that is a father and is black. A little girl that is ten and is in between black and white. A grandmother that is black. A lady that is white and is the mother. Their religion is Baptist (grade 4 female).

A family moved into my house. They come from Brazil. They like to play soccer I guess because Brazil has the best soccer team in the world. They talk a different language. The eat different foods. They were a different colour (grade 5 male).
A Catholic family now lives in my house. Dennis, the father is white but Joan the mother is black. Reid, the son is also black. Their cat is a mix of black and white. They like bowling, baking and everything about the Montreal Canadians (grade 4 female).

My house is for sale and we are looking for a quiet family with lots of positivity. One family that is thinking of moving in are from Kenya. This family is very big but very calm. ...Their last name is Bioncardini. They all have black skin and talk a little different but they are still interesting (grade 5 female).

With just a little coaching, students who previously failed to mention diversity in their assignments were suddenly very aware of the issue. It must be noted that although the attention to diversity is present, it is couched in several assumptions. For example, the Bioncardini is big but calm and the American family has a different skin colour but are still nice. This persistence of the prejudicial ideas underlines the fact that banking the information is not enough; it must be accompanied with critical thinking and understanding.

**Racism and a White Canada:**

In his discussion on racism, Citron (1971) warns that “the essential problem is not bigots who need to hate, but the masses of whites whose minds have been formed in a racist society, padded in illusory concepts, and equipped with a set of unreal presuppositions in a make-believe world” (p.6). Unfortunately, several Maritime school districts have failed to take heed of Citron’s caution. Instead, they continue to recognize racism as apparent acts of hate rather than unchallenged beliefs. Consequently, little has been done to counter or contest such racist convictions. Although certainly not bigots, my participants appeared to belong to the group who “minds have been formed in a racist society” through the reception of overt and subliminal messages depicting their identity as representation of the norm. Rather than a critical understanding and genuine acknowledgement of diversity, they relied on supplying the right answer at the right time. Does this mean that their actions are less detrimental to Canadian society? During one of our last interviews, Sara showed me a racist pamphlet distributed in a neighboring city and best answered this question. The pamphlet called for support for “ridding Canada of Jews, Niggers, and gays...in a holy war for a White Canada.”

Putting down the paper, and looking me straight in the eye Sara stated:

This puts a fear in my heart. Those drawings, the students, drawings of the white Canadians, are quiet and unintentional echoes of the overt messages stated by full force bigots. This is what is in those drawings, the white Canada that this racist pamphlet calls for. The bigots want a white Canada because they think it’s the way Canada should be. My students draw white Canadians because they have been taught the same norm. Ask a student in my class, can a
Canadian be black or brown and they will say, “Oh, of course.” But when they reveal their true beliefs, they draw a white Canada. This puts a fear in my heart. (Interview, February 14, 2000)
CHAPTER VI – USING THE MULTICULTURAL TEXTS

From January to the beginning of March, my attention was focussed on developing a sense of what the students perceived to be the Canadian identity. Once I had established an idea of these images, I was ready to test the impact of the multicultural literature. I introduced my texts after March break on March 9, 1998.

Multicultural Literature By Many Other Names:

As I have noted throughout this thesis, and in particular in chapter 2, there is an abundance of past and present-day research acclaiming the merits of multicultural literature in the classroom (see Arnez, 1969; Camarata, 1991; Henry et al., 2000; Norton, 1985, 1990; Rasinski, & Padak, 1990). Despite the terminology – whether it be “literature for understanding” (Arnez, 1969), “literature for the disadvantaged child” (Seaberg, 1969), multicultural (MacPhee, 1997), multiethnic (Roney, 1986) cross-cultural (Stewig, 1992), or anti-racist (Reed, d.n.k.) – the premise is essentially the same: literature from a variety of cultures helps children appreciate diversity. The emphasis and depth of this assertion, however, varies. Some educators see multicultural literature as a tool to acquaint students with the different “cultural and physical characteristics among people” (Dowd, 1992) thus broadening the image of the national identity (Banks, 1998). Others endorse the genre as having the ability to challenge a Eurocentric curriculum (Henry et al, 2000). Finally, some believe multicultural literature as having “the power to facilitate an ethнич sense which enhances a concern for others, responsibility to the values of diversity and human rights, and a sense of hope that, which developing the capacity to look life in the face, maintains a vigilance against injustice” (Simon & Armitage-Simon, 1995, p. 27). Each account portrays distinct agendas and expectations of the literature and of education as a whole. My own anticipations for using multicultural literature have spanned all of the above descriptors and now rest with Simon and Armitage-Simon’s (1995) belief that the genre can be used to provide children with the tools to protect difference and attain hope for a harmonious world.

Outlining the Research Plot:

My research journey during the use of the literature in the classroom took a couple of twists and turns and eventually, I had to build a new pathway. The first part of this chapter describes these changes by explaining the transition from working within one model to dividing it into two. Next, I provide examples of the various reactions to the two new models. Finally, I present a discussion on frameworks and the ways in which they influenced my readers. The
chapter concludes with the question of which model facilitated a pluralistic vision of the Canadian citizen.

Moving From Multicultural to “Risky Stories”?

When I first began to use my selected texts the students were very receptive. Like many children, my participants seemed to enjoy being read to. On days that I did not read, I often received requests to do so. I encouraged the subject and extent of post-reading discussions to be directed by the students. When their topic of choice centered on diversity, the students expressed interest in different foods, historical figures, and in special events. Put another way, they were keen to know about food, figures, and festivals.

Changes occurred when I made a purposeful move towards books that were more overt in their treatment of racism. Although both Sara and the students seemed very receptive to the multicultural books and enjoyed the story sessions, I began to have the feeling that these stories were being viewed outside a greater political context. By this I mean, that struggles dealing with such problems as racism and isolation were minimized to the quaint message of let’s just get along.

After a month of less-risky texts, I decided to choose a topic that was more challenging. I wanted to hear the students’ thoughts on racism and discrimination and selected a story that could evoke such a dialogue. Eve Bunting’s Cheyenne Again (1995) seemed to be the perfect choice. The story recounts a young Cheyenne boy’s tragic experience in a residential school and his forced transition into the White world. Through both its graphic illustrations and stark text, the book provides vivid images of the hardships endured by many Aboriginal children during the time of residential schools. Although the story itself is fictional, Bunting includes an afterward that verifies the existence of residential schools both in the United States and Canada, which I also planned to read to the students. Here is an account of what happened:

It Wasn’t That Bad:

*Today I decided to use a book more blatant in its discussion on racism. Eve Bunting’s Cheyenne Again (1995) fit the bill. Not only is Bunting’s text very clear about what happened to many of the Native children, but the illustrations are also very descriptive. For the first time in my experience, the students were completely silent during the reading. Furthermore, the silence remained for several seconds after I was finished. Then, a hand from the back of the room tentatively went up. I nodded in the student’s direction and a quiet female voice asked, “Did this really happen?”*
I explained that although this particular book is fictional, it is based on real-life experiences. As described in the afterward, hundreds of young Aboriginal children were taken from their families and placed in residential schools. I was about to continue and describe some of the conditions when Sara interrupted and stated, "It wasn't that bad, you have to remember the author is telling you a story that she wants you to remember." As I looked around, I saw expressions of relief on many of the students' faces. I could almost hear the collective sigh of relief. The possibility of truth in this story had disturbed them and Sara's comment had diffused that tension. I was stunned and fell into silence myself. I left soon after, upset and worried about the rest of my time in this class. (Field notes, April 14, 1998)

My journal entry a few hours later:

A few hours have passed since I left Sara's class and I feel ready to write down my feelings. One frustration about being so far from OISE is that I do not have ready access to people who I can talk to about my work. I was completely blown away by Sara's response. I thought K__'s question was the perfect opportunity to discuss a segment of racism in Canadian history. I still have the chance to talk about the book in my focus group but the chance for a class-wide discussion is lost. Why was Sara afraid to talk about the book? She knows that my research includes talking about racism to the class. I have seen her talk about racism to her students, so why the reluctance? How can I feel free to continue my research if she continues to curtail my lessons? I need to talk to her about this. (Journal entry, April 14, 1998)

So here was my confusion. From what I knew, Sara had always been very up front about racism. On the other hand, she had purposely deflated a perfect teachable moment for a discussion on difference and the Canadian identity.

I realized that I needed to speak with Sara about this. During one of our interviews, I approached the subject on a general basis and then moved on to specifics.

MV: Do you discuss diversity in your class?

S: Yes.

MV: Proactive or reactive response?

S: Both. When we have a direct situation, we go at it headfirst. For example, if someone was caught teasing someone else, I would call the parents and deal with the situation right away.

MV: Have you ever done any Holocaust education in your class?

S: Very little...it's the age. Last year I took my grade 4/5 class to the art gallery. There happened to be a showing of holocaust pictures that were very graphic. We were advised by the museum officials not to let the kids see them -- they
were too graphic. When they asked why they couldn't go in, I told them. They said, "What was it?" I explained that during W.W.II, there were camps set up for mainly Jewish people, but not only for Jewish people, and they were treated very badly. They were starved to death, worked to death, there were various experiments done on them... I told them that these pictures show all that and this [today] is such a good afternoon and we've had such a good day and we shouldn't leave here feeling so bad. At this age, the students are too young.

MV: Actually, I have noticed that you sometimes purposely veer away from certain class discussions such as on the Holocaust or a few days, ago, when I read Cheyenne Again, you downplayed the reality of residential schools.

S: Yes, as I said, my students are too young...ten, eleven it's too young.

MV: So, how do you talk about diversity to the class?

S: I explain that religion and skin colour is only part of us. Really we are all the same and I demonstrate this by treating the kids this way. Let me tell you a story. June had a friend from kindergarten whose mummy was Black and Daddy was White. And I had taught Daddy. By coincidence, these little girls became close, close friends. And I think the nicest memory I have of them was the night before that family moved to Toronto. The little girl spent the night at our cottage and I went in to tuck them in. They were both fast asleep with their arms around each other. At that moment, it didn't matter that they were White or Black, they were just two friends who were parting. See colour didn't matter and that's what I try to teach. (Interview, April 16, 1998)

Sara's colourblind approach to diversity may not sit easy with many critical pedagogists, multicultural and anti-racist educators. However, in her defense, it should be noted that her stance is a common one. Even outstanding educators have fallen prey to the comfortable nature of this approach. For example, Vivian Paley (1979) considers her long-standing support of the colourblind approach in her story, White Teacher. Believing that children needed to be protected from the realities of racism, Paley discusses her early attempts to veer away from references to race. However, despite her efforts, Paley recognizes that her students forced the issue in to classroom.

In one particular example, Paley relates an instance in which she read Whistle for Willey, a story with a Black main character, to her kindergarten class. Fearing that her Black students would be uncomfortable engaging in a dialogue about race, Paley not only discouraged questions from the students but also refrained from even noting Willey's black skin. She discovered the folly of her plans after a White student approached her and announced his belief that all Black people, like those in Whistle for Willey, were poor. Her attempts to challenge this stereotype were met with the students' disinterest. Paley notes that she then realized that
the true teachable moment to discuss stereotypes was undermined by her own reluctance to bring up the issue during the reading. She acknowledges, "we showed respect by completely ignoring black people as black people. Colourblindness was the essence of the creed" (p. 9). Her experience in working with minority students brought her to the realization that the colourblind stance was for her benefit, not her students. "It was obvious," Paley states, "that I hoped to ignore feelings, not spare them" (p. 130).

Various other educators have also spoken out against the misconception that issue avoidance is an effective technique in protecting children from the ugliness of racism (see Banks, 1998; Fine, 1991; Neito, 1994). While it may appear that teachers are doing their students a favour, the reality, as Jonathan Kozol (1967) points out, is that this behaviour is more for the benefit of the teachers than for the students.

While I understood Sara’s own position, I did not agree with it and felt uncomfortable supporting it. After a long conversation, she agreed to allow me the privilege to continue my own strategy as long as I did not do the children any harm.

**Same Story: Different Plot:**

As I was not convinced that the participants were too young to deal with traumatic issues, I decided to bring *Cheyenne Again* (1995) to the next critical reading group meeting. This decision appeared to be a good one as the group appeared to be less reticent in approaching the taboo text and willingly gave me their opinion:

Chris: I thought the story was boring. The ending was dumb [the child runs from the school away but is caught]. If I was him I would have made a bow and arrow set and killed the guys that came after him! And they would never cut my hair!

MV: Do you think that would be a believable ending?

Chris: Well it’s just a story.

Barb: I don’t think so. Anyway, where would he get the stuff to make the bow and arrows?

Chris: In the shop class. Remember they all had to work there.

MV: Were any of you bothered by the story?

Lisa: What do you mean?
MV: I mean did it make you feel a certain way?

Lisa: It made me feel sad. Especially when he got caught for running away.

Chris: It didn't make me feel sad. I didn't like it.

MV: Why?

Chris: I don't know, dumb ending.

Barb: ... it's really sad. I mean, it's not fair just because he's an Indian. They have rights too. I didn't like it when the teacher called him a dumb Indian. But ... can I say something about the pictures? Well, the pictures made me more sad because you could see what happened to him.

Lisa: Like the part where they put the chain on his legs. That was so mean!

Barb: That made me feel like crying.

MV: You mean if I just told you the story and didn't show you any pictures, it wouldn't have been so bad?

Lisa & Barb: ya.

Chris: That's dumb, then it would be boring. It didn't make me cry! (Interview, April 21, 1998)

Although my critical reading group did express some distress over the story, this did not prevent them from sharing their feelings. I had expected some differences between the immediate class reaction and my group's reaction to the text, as the latter had been tempered by time. However, not only were my participants amenable to answering my questions but also, when given the opportunity, they willfully requested further information about the story:

Barb: May I ask a question? I didn't understand this part here in the book when the teacher says, "Never forget that you are Indian inside."

MV: What do you think it means?

Barb: ... maybe because those people at the school didn't want to teach him the Indian stories that he talked about ... and he might forget the stories and then forget things about himself. They thought he was stupid because he was an Indian. I don't know why. It doesn't make sense to me really.

Lisa: That's racism.

MV: What's racism?
Lisa: Well being mean, you know, being mean to Indians. That's racism, isn't it? Never mind.

MV: David, you haven't said anything yet.

David: I liked listening to the story but it wasn't nice what they did.

Lisa: How can anyone be so mean?

Barb: Maybe...they didn't know they were being so mean to them. Maybe they thought the school was a good thing. (Interview, April 21, 1998)

This conversation was clearly based on their uncritical reactions to the text and lacked multi-layered thinking but they at least were engaged. At this point, my participants had not yet learned to listen to a story critically. They had a sense that what happened to the young child was unfair and perhaps, as suggested by Barb, accidental. Lisa also had some vague idea that the plot was related to racism because a Native person was treated unfairly but she was not sure how or why. Nevertheless, their posing of questions and attempts to comprehend the obvious mistreatment of the Native child suggested the promise of deeper understanding once these students have acquired the necessary tools for critical thought.

Armed with the successful exchange with my critical group, I decided to again introduce another text that conveyed images of overt racism. Uncle Jed's Barbershop (Mitchell, 1993) seemed to fit my choice. The plot describes a black man's dreams of owning a barbershop. Because of various hardships, including the Great Depression, his goal only comes to fruition once he is an old man. Embedded in the main plot is the sub plot of Jed's niece, the narrator, and her need for an operation. In telling this part of the story, she casually mentions the existence of segregated waiting rooms:

In those days, they kept black and white separate. There were separate public restrooms, separate water fountains, separate schools. It was called segregation. So in the hospital we had to go to the colored waiting room. Even though I was unconscious, the doctors wouldn't look at me until they had finished with all of the white patients. (Mitchell, 1993, p. 12-13)

Although this book refers to the issue of racism, I believed it to be far removed from the previous seemingly problematic book. First of all, there is a happy ending for everyone; the operation is a success and Jed eventually gets his shop. Other than the above statement, there is little reference made regarding unfair treatment. Even segregation is mentioned in a non-judgmental voice. Yet once again the class appeared startled by the story. This time, during a surface discussion of segregation, one of the students put her hand up and asked, "Are all white
people like this; does this make me a bad person?” Before I had a chance to form a response, Sara stepped in and replied, “K__, don’t be so foolish. Either ask a sensible question or don’t ask one at all” (Field notes, April 23, 1998).

As I did not have a chance to reply to the student’s question in class, I again decided to broach the subject with my critical reading group. Conversation with my focus group revealed to me that the above-noted student’s question was not atypical but actually represented the views of some of her classmates. During our interview, the participants (except for Chris who felt that they should have just charged into the hospital) cautiously gave their views on segregation. Everyone was in agreement that “it’s stupid” (Lisa), “it wasn’t fair” (Barb), and “I would try to help someone whatever their skin colour (David).” However, Barb touched upon the tension that they were feeling when she pondered,

Sometimes I don’t understand how white people got to do this. I mean who said, ‘O.K. for now on, white people will have no problems and if you’re not white we can treat you bad?’ It makes me feel bad but I don’t know why. It just seems wrong to me. I mean I would never do stuff like they did in the story. How could anyone? (Interview, April 23, 1998)

Barb’s struggles with a sense of unidentifiable guilt is similar to that expressed by the student in the class. As I was mindful of Carrington & Short’s (1993) concerns regarding the ethical dilemmas of interviewing children about racism without intervening (see chapter 2), I contributed very little to this conversation and instead attempted to facilitate discussion among the four students. As a result, the students did not appear to be able to work out their feelings. Both David and Lisa noted that the story made them feel bad but could not articulate their reactions and Barb left with a lot of the same feelings that she had upon arrival to the meeting. My reluctance to take on a more leadership role in our discussions on diversity and racism left me with the same feeling I experienced after an all-class session – that I was not doing enough to facilitate critical thinking.

You Have to Fall Down Before You Can Rise Up:

My feelings regarding the lack of progress did not deter my critical reading group. They rarely shied away from a book and, as time went on, they became more vocal and thoughtful of their opinions. In contrast, students in the entire class setting did not seem as engaged as they had in January and appeared disinterested in follow-up discussions. When they did touch on issues of diversity, their observations were limited to being nice and not being racist. I felt as if a wall was building between the class and myself.
The final brick was laid after a reading of Paul Yee’s (1997) *Ghost Train*, a story about the mistreatment of the Chinese immigrant workers who helped to build the Canadian railroad. Not long after the story, Ying gave me a picture. Although he had drawn several pictures in the past for me, this one was different. The drawing was a picture of an airplane dropping bombs on an unidentifiable location. Underneath, he had written “It makes me sad to know Canada did not want my people” (Field notes, April 30, 1998). Ying’s note signaled a traumatic point in my research. My fear that I may have done these children harm caused me to retreat and assess the situation.

*What’s Going On?:*

Essentially, I was dealing with two dichotomous experiences. On one hand, the class seemed to be bothered by the anti-racist books, indicating a preference for the texts that were more cross-cultural in nature. In contrast, my critical reading group revealed little distress in working with the more challenging stories and seemed comfortable in expressing their feelings. Why the difference?

Simon and Armitage-Simon’s (1995) “Teaching Risky Stories” provided me with a suggestive solution to my research mystery. Their argument that essential qualities for teaching traumatic episodes in history include the careful selection of text and the need for “time during which the teacher and children share written and oral responses to the story” (p. 31), resonated with a sense of truth for me. In the classroom, I did not feel the complete freedom to openly discuss the stories. Instead, I felt inhibited by the fear that I may upset someone. I now believe that my own sense of discomfort was transferred onto the students thus limiting our conversations. When working with my critical reading group, I felt free to push the boundaries of thought because I knew I could address the individual concerns of four students. According to what Simon and Armitage-Simon’s (1995) were saying, my success with the critical reading group could be traced back to the productive and insightful conversations that supported the texts.

*A Change in Tactics:*

My discovery led me to the decision to divide my research into two investigations of the same question. I had already decided to use Banks’ (1989) model for multicultural literature as part of my study’s methodology. However, rather than apply the four stages to both my whole-class group and my critical reading group, I separated the stages and applied different levels to the different groups. In the class, I remained at level two of Banks’ model, the “additive approach” where multicultural literature is used to supplement the curriculum rather than infuse
My use of the books was situated in a framework akin to Harper’s “Inviting Difference—Celebrating Diversity” phase (1997, p. 199-200). Students were made aware of cultural differences among groups but little was said about how these differences are played out in a racist society. The books used in this forum addressed different cultures, holidays, heroes, and happy endings. We also used a lot of books whose illustrations presented visible diversity while plot attended to non-diversity issues. During follow-up conversations, I attempted to take the stance of impartial observer, often asking Sara to control the conversation. This way, I could observe Sara’s own comfort zone in regards to her participation in the dialogue on diversity and refrain from impressing my own convictions on the class.

While the in-class group halted at the second phase of Bank’s hierarchical model of multicultural education (1989), my critical reading group was encouraged to continue to the “transformative approach” and, I hoped, all the way up to the “decision-making and social action approach” (Banks, 1989). The latter group used both the “friendly” as well as the “risky” multicultural stories. Furthermore, I changed my position in the small group from observer to participant, and deliberately supplemented the texts with dialogue on the struggles of racism.

I did not settle upon this resolution without reservations. I was concerned about the light touch delivery that I was using in the classroom as I was aware of how the surface treatment of multicultural literature can inadvertently enhance rather than mitigate racial stereotypes and biases (Beach, 1996; Rasinski & Padak, 1990, Simon & Armitage-Simon, 1995). However, at the same time, numerous studies on the use of multicultural literature claim measurable changes in students’ attitudes without any proposal of the critical readings of texts (see MacPhee, 1997; Roney, 1986; Yokota, 1993). Due to the increased use of multicultural children’s literature in the classroom, I felt it essential to understand appropriate teaching techniques as well as possible harmful consequences. I decided that the classroom could be used as a forum to collect data on the effects of the utilization of “friendly” multicultural literature whereas the focus group could provide insights on the use of more challenging books reviewed from a critical approach. Both groups could then be evaluated on changes in attitude regarding the Canadian citizen.

In-Class Vs. Critical Reading Group:

Student reactions to the texts used in the classroom revealed particular tendencies that help me ascertain to what point they were comfortable discussing difference. In-class responses to the texts demonstrated rigid barriers in achieving an understanding of diversity as well as an inability to accept information that did not concur with pre-existing ideas. In
contrast, reactions from the critical reading group indicated a growing perimeter of comfort as well as the ability to confront a more complex vision of diversity. The contrast was especially evident when observing each group’s attention to the same book. As either Sara or myself read to the students several times a week, it is not feasible to describe their different impressions to every book. Instead, I have focussed on a select sample which highlight particular characteristics evident in each group’s reaction.

**We Are All the Same Inside:**

After dividing my model, one of the first texts that I used in the classroom is Sheree Fitch’s (1997) *If You Could Wear My Sneakers*, a poetry book about children’s rights. Sara was in the middle of a poetry unit and we decided that the title poem (cited at the beginning of chapter 4) could be used as a basis for a lesson on metaphors. As Sara initiated a discussion on the poem, she asked for students to provide personal examples of what Fitch was trying to say. The students eagerly gave a range of examples including incidents of not being treated fairly. Some of their examples of unfair treatment included contact with discrimination, such as ageism and sexism. Conspicuously missing from the ism list however, was racism. Not one student who referred to discrimination mentioned racism.

Sara then took the analysis further by explaining that the poem pertained to Article 2 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* which states, “All rights apply to all children without exception” (Fitch, 1997, p. 32). Sara then cued them by asking if she should treat Ying differently from another student just because he is Chinese. The students instantly directed their attention to racial diversity:

> It is as if a bell has gone off signally all hands to go up. Everyone seems to have a suggestion on how to fight prejudice. One student notes that everyone should be treated the same regardless of skin colour. Another student mentions being nice to “people who are new to the country because we might have a war in Canada and have to move somewhere else too.” Another student suggests being patient with Ying’s problem with English by listening to him carefully. At this point, Ying turns around and high-fives the student who made the suggestion. In my imaginative eye, this class has been transported back to the red little schoolhouse era of cheerful “golden rule” examples. Everyone is proposing thoughtful and caring suggestions for treating other people. I have noticed that when talking about racial diversity, the students often address their examples to either Ying or Sara and her family. No one mentions Steven and any problems he may encounter because he is Chinese. They only talk about him when they are discussing mental ability.

Another common occurrence is the question and retreat method often used by Sara. When the students give examples referring to themselves or someone they know, Sara encourages them to provide more information through
methods such as Socratic questioning. But not when the examples pertain to Sara or her daughter; these she deliberately downplays just as she had done with topics such as the Holocaust. Like the students who avoid certain books, she exhibits a reluctance to broach topics that cause her discomfort.

Sara concludes the lesson by commending everyone on their sensitivity and prompting them to remember that “we are all the same inside.” (Field notes, May 6, 1998)

This lesson stood in stark contrast to the conversations I had attempted to facilitate with the students regarding such texts as Cheyenne Again (Bunting, 1995) or Ghost Train (Yee, 1997). For example, when Sara requested reactions to the poem, hands shot into the air with students eager to describe their experiences of unfair treatment. They were also forthcoming with anecdotes where they had come to a victim’s aid. Most often these latter accounts revolved around helping Ying. Through these stories, they conveyed their belief in fairness for all people, something I had already recognized in these children. My participants comfortably related to stories where a victim of unfair treatment enjoyed some type of intervention. Unlike Cheyenne Again (Bunting, 1995), where an unjust act is committed against a young child by an unknown system for unknown reasons, Fitch’s poems are fun, rhythmic, and removed from overt pain. The fact that all of the characters are animals, I think, also helps to alleviate distress. Most of the students’ stories contained an identifiable villain perpetrating the injustice as well as a happy ending. Although both Bunting (1995) and Fitch (1997) deal with the rights of children and the ease with which societies trespass these rights, the former text clearly caused students in the in-class session distress with its undisguised image of racism. Such presentations were obviously problematic for them; it was this dilemma that I wanted to further explore.

My attempts to discuss Fitch’s book with the focus group did not yield great results in reference to my research question. If You Could Wear My Sneakers (1997) was one of the favourites among both sets of participants but, like the rest of the class, the critical reading group was more focussed on the joy of the poetry than the messages contained therein. Most of our time was spent on reading the poems aloud without trying to laugh or getting tongue-tied. One comment; however, did strike a chord with me. During our discussion on the book’s premise, I queried as to why children would need rights. I received several reasons but David’s thoughtful response revealed a recognition of power when he noted, “It’s easy to be mean to children because it hard for them to fight back. I think, maybe sometimes older people forget that we are people too and can do important things too” (Interview, May 6, 1998). Racial
diversity may not hold priority in their conceptual framework of justice but they did understand unfair treatment and lack of respect. Our text discussions could then depart from this starting point.

**Make It Funny:**

Another book that I chose for both the classroom and my focus group was Robert Munsch’s *From Far Away* (1995), a true story about Saoussan, young girl whose family leaves war-torn Lebanon for Canada. The book centers on Saoussan’s attempts to understand Canadian life and her new school. Situated in a humorous context, Saoussan (an actual co-author of the book) relates such experiences as struggling with English and having an unfortunate accident after being frightened by Halloween decorations hanging in the washroom. Her suffering is mitigated by the laughable situations created by Munsch. In the end, Saoussan becomes accustomed to her new life, makes a lot of friends, and decides that she likes living in Canada.

The students clearly enjoyed this book and it showed in their comments. Again, they referred to their own personal stories of times when they had been confused. Like the amusing events in the book, the students’ stories were funny, many of which clearly embellished for effect. I tried to get them to think about the unpleasant side of being confused by describing my own experiences of dislocation. They expressed some sympathy but quickly moved back to the more comical adventures. When I asked them to imagine what it would be like to move to a new country, they were quick to accommodate my request by conceiving all sorts of ludicrous possibilities. They were not prepared to talk about issues such as isolation, prejudice, or exclusion. Munsch’s book had provided a framework of the hilarious and it was in this context that they preferred to understand the newcomer’s experiences. Sara attempted to prompt Ying in discussing his experiences of coming to Canada and although he remained quiet, he did inspire comments:

"Can you imagine if Ying peed in the class," giggles J_____. Her comment sets off an explosion of laughter causing Ying to produce one of his wide toothy smiles. Sara attempts to calm them down with a serious examination of this issue. Although the students listen for a moment, they continue to come up with silly scenarios. Sara eventually flings her hands in the air and says, “Perhaps we should go back to the Sheree Fitch book and you can make up silly poems with your ideas.” The class gives loud approval of this suggestion but Sara just shakes her head and continues the lesson. Stressing her emphasis on being kind to each other, Sara asks the class to pretend Saoussan has just arrived in their class and requests suggestions of what they could do to make her feel more at ease. These suggestions provide some interesting information. Most of the
Students say they would offer to give her something such as clothes, food, and money. There is a widely accepted assumption that she is poor and in need; yet these assumptions have no basis in the book, which describes the family flying to Canada, living in a comfortable home, and never mentions poverty. Despite this contradiction between the text and their perception, the students' comments are not challenged by anyone, including Sara. (Field notes, May 8, 1998)

Observing the class, I felt as if I was witnessing two different events. First, they appeared to be learning about diversity by exploring one of the reasons people immigrate to Canada. However, many of the unchallenged comments contributed to the survival of various stereotypes. For example, similar to the assumptions of poverty and need that were made in our earlier discussions on immigrants and refugees (see chapter 5), the students also assumed that Saoussan would be wanting.

In contrast to their in-class behaviour, when the students of the critical reading group revisited this text, they were willing to discuss more serious issues. Their participation illustrates the possibility that the initial group was not limited by the humour of the book but rather chose to align themselves with that particular response because it satisfied their comfort zone with difference. These same students who had provided ridiculous stories in the classroom were suddenly serious in their deliberation of the book:

MV: Robert Munsch made this a funny story but do you think another author might have decided to make it more serious?

Barb: The first part of the book wasn’t funny, you know the part about the war and house; their house had holes in the walls because of the bombs. Everyone was crying. My mom and I discussed this book last night. I have it at home. And we decided that the only funny part is when she pees on her teacher’s lap and it was only funny for everyone else, not her so-

Lisa: I know I would die!

Barb: So if she felt bad already she would feel even worse.

MV: If you were to write this story, would anyone write it differently?

Chris: I would have her grab the skeleton and rip it all to pieces. ...and her mother is wearing weird clothes.

MV: You would change how the mother is drawn?

Chris: Just that thing around her head. I would put her in normal clothes.

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8 Parental influence held a great importance in this small group. Both Barb and David discussed this project with their parents and Chris often supported his prejudicial beliefs with comments made by his father.
MV: What do you mean by normal?

Chris: You know, normal. It just looked strange and ... am I in trouble for saying that?

MV: Of course not. You can say whatever you want as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone.

Lisa: Some religions wear stuff like that, right? She should have made friends with someone in her class so they could help her you know, know stuff.

Barb: This would be a good story to write. But I would make it a chapter book and talk about how sad she is because I think she was sad. I would be. Her home is wrecked, she can’t speak English. There’s too much to put in a storybook.

MV: You don’t think Robert Munsch did a good job in describing her new feelings?

David: But he makes everything funny. I like him because he makes me laugh.

Barb: No, he wrote Love Me Forever. That wasn’t funny. He didn’t have to make this funny. He made a creative choice; that’s what Dr. ____ [the other researcher in the class] calls it when the writer has to decide what kind of book they’re going to write. My creative choice would be to make this story sadder and talk about how hard it is to be in a new place. (Interview, May 8, 1998)

Here was a debate that suggested intimations of critical literacy! The discussion was interesting, exciting, thoughtful, and reflective of the students’ worlds. True, this story was not overly traumatic; however, it certainly was a start towards more thoughtful analysis of texts relating to diversity. For example, Barb’s assertion that the short format does not do justice to Saoussan’s sense of loneliness reveals far more sophisticated thinking than the stories I heard in the classroom. The students were being called to critically dissect the body of Munsch’s story and evaluate his choices in comparison to what they would do. Not all of these students responded to this call but this exchange was certainly a change from the unified uncritical approach that I had observed in the classroom.

The Same Story; a Different Voice:

In order to nurture the progress that I felt my critical reading group was making, I decided to introduce them to more challenging text not being used in the classroom. This time I chose, Smith-Ayala’s Marisol and the Yellow Messenger (1994), another story about a young girl forced to move to Canada in order to escape her war-torn country. Although the subject is similar to that of Munsch’s From Far Away (1995), Smith-Ayala’s (1994) story resonates with
sorrow and pain. Unlike Munsch's heroine who escapes with her entire family, Marisol not only has to deal with a new home and a new country but also with the murder of her father and the separation from her grandparents. To illustrate the different treatment of her story, here is a brief excerpt of a dream sequence in which a group of women console Marisol, who has cried herself to sleep:

"We see everything and are touched by everything. Now look inside - your tears are ours, because your father was our son. And when he died our voices sobbed along with yours, the aching drums sounded from within our wombs."

Marisol felt safe and protected, and for the first time a deep pain in her body began to flow out. (p. 18-19)

The voice in this story is a complete contrast to that created by Munsch. The sorrow of the story is also intensified by the time factor. In contrast to Munsch's (1995) retrospective narrative told after Saoussan has settled into her new life, Marisol's suffering is immediate with little promise of improvement. It is a challenge to read this story for the first time without hearing your voice crack. In fact, the morning I gave the book to the focus group, I first read the story several times in order to desensitize myself. I believed this story would touch my critical reading group participants. I was not disappointed.

Resultant of the fact that this story is so focussed on Marisol's immediate plight, it became the dominant theme of our discourse. The students' first concern was Marisol's sense of loneliness. When we discussed Saoussan in the Munsch book (1995), my participants felt that she should find a friend and learn English. The onus was on her to deal with her adjustment problems. This time I pushed for reasons that were outside of the main character's control. Was Marisol lonely because of factors that she could influence or were there conditions outside of her sphere of influence? In the book, the author provides various reasons for Marisol's sorrow: the death of her father, the distance from her home and grandparents, the lack of friends, and the cold Canadian weather. As, most of these factors are outside of Marisol's realm of command, I asked students to explain the absence of playmates, a factor she may have be able to control.

At first, my participants leaned towards the implication that Marisol needed to make changes such as learn English or buy more winter clothes so that she could play outside with other kids. Once these reasons were proposed, I made my own suggestion as a means to push the boundaries of thought:
MV: Does anyone think it's possible that the reason Marisol did not have many friends was because no one would play with her?

Lisa: Why not? She's nice. She saved the little bird. I would be with her.

MV: Maybe some kids wouldn't want to play with her because she's different. She speaks a different language and comes from another place.

Lisa: But that would be mean. That's racism, isn't it?

Barb: I guess some kids might not want to play with her. Maybe because it's too hard to teach her new games if she doesn't understand what they are saying.

MV: You mean, it wouldn't be worth their effort?

Barb: Well, if everyone already has friends, ya, they may not want to try.

David: Ying told me that one guy played with him last year but then some other people started calling Ying a name and

MV: What kind of name?

David: Um, you know...(long pause) I don't want to say it.

Chris: They called him chinky and slanty eyes.

Lisa: You called him that too.

Chris: No I didn't.

MV: O.K. So David, tell us what happened.

David: Well he stopped playing with Ying and started to call him names too.

Chris: But sometimes Ying is so dumb. Like at the party, he didn't know what potato salad was and remember when Mrs. [Simon] asked him if he had butterflies in his stomach and he started laughing!

Barb: That's not nice really. Ying's nice and just because he doesn't know a lot about what we know doesn't mean he's stupid.

Lisa: That's dumb. I would tell those boys off! I play with Ying. I don't care if his eyes look funny.

MV: Do you think his eyes look funny?

Lisa: Well you know, they don't look like ours or even yours but...I don't know what...
Barb: They don’t look funny, just different from ours.

David: Well, you know how I said that person stopped playing with him. Maybe if he would have kept on playing with him, they would have made fun of him too.

MV: That is certainly a possibility. How would any of you deal with that?

Chris: I’d beat them up and then... don’t mess with me.

Barb: But that would only add to the problem. I know Ying is nice and I would stick by him. My real friends wouldn’t tease me or bother me. Mrs. Simon told us that sometimes it’s hard to do what’s right and easier to be like everyone else. But she said, if we do what feels good in our hearts, we will feel better after.

(Interview, May 12, 1998)

What I found interesting in this segment is that the conversation had completely veered away from Marisol and centered on a real human being that is known to them. They examined the problems possibly facing Marisol by placing them in a context of the familiar. In fact, once I listened to this interview on tape, I realized that we never returned to Marisol but rather spent the rest of the time talking about Ying. As I noted in chapter 4, this behaviour is predicted by Tappan and Brown (1989) who suggest storytelling as a method of engaging children in conversation regarding the dilemmas existing in their own lives.

Shadow Texts:

Attempting to understand Saoussan’s situation, was just one example of the frequent attempts by students in both groups to reason out a particular action or character motivation not explained by the author. Simon and Armitage-Simon (1995) define the process of story rationalization as creating “shadow texts.” According to these educators, shadow texts are “secondary narratives constructed in response to the unresolved questions a primary narrative elicits. Shadow texts are ‘written’ as people attempt to mediate the questions that accompany and move in time with the hearing of an account” (1995, p. 30). Moreover, they argue that prior knowledge and belief help develop the plots of the shadow texts. This is similar to the contention made by Rosenblatt (1978, 1983), who notes that the act of reading does not happen in isolation but rather is couched in the world in which we live and experience.

One of the unexplained incidents in Marisol and the Yellow Messenger (Smith-Ayala, 1994) is the death of the father. In the following interview excerpt Chris and David both attempt to utilize pre-existing knowledge to form their shadow texts regarding Marisol’s father. As a result, one assumes the father to be a criminal, the other, a hero:
Chris: How come no one comes to take them [the family] back to jail?

MV: Why would anyone put them in jail?

Chris: Well...it's...I don't know what he did but he must have done something if they killed him, the father I mean and if they have to take off to Canada the police must be looking for them to take them back.

Barb: I don't think the police killed him, it doesn't say that. It just says that he was killed.

Chris: Ya but he must have done something, I mean if her father was just killed they won't have to run away or anything.

David: Maybe her father was good and was trying to help poor people. I saw this movie where this priest was fighting the leader of the place because he was evil and everyone who worked with him only wanted money and stuff. But the priest ignored the leader and instead tried to fight against him by hiding people who were fighting against him too. Anyway they killed him and everyone was really sad because he was so good.

Chris: Her father can't be a priest cause he has kids!

David: Well I know that but maybe the father was fighting someone evil and got killed.

Barb: I don't think they were mean because Marisol and her family took care of the little bird. If they were mean people they would have not taken care of the bird.

Chris: I think her father did something and they were hiding. My dad says that a lot of the people who move to Canada are hiding cause they broke the law somewhere else.

David: Why would they want to hide in Canada?

Chris: I don't know....anyways it's [Canada] big and it's hard to find someone. (Interview, May 12, 1998)

As shadow texts may be formed out of a prejudicial or misinformed premise, Simon and Armitage-Simon (1995) argue that it is crucial for the teacher to guide and question students in their generation of these narratives:

...they [the students] may either write shadow texts that serve their own (at times racist or sexist) preconceptions or, failing to accomplish this, repress, dismiss, or become indifferent to such stories....Thus recognizing that risky stories evoke shadow texts, the task would be for students and teachers to find

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ways to uncover those questions that structure the shadow texts any given story produces, and collectively explore how to respond to these questions. (p. 30)

There were certainly several examples of students developing various shadow texts in this interview and in others. For example, Barb attempted to reason the mistreatment of the Native child by suggesting that the schools meant well. Similarly, Chris proposed a stereotypical shadow text with the suggestion that people who come to Canada are criminals. Had I not challenged some of the ideas, these texts stood in danger of becoming part of a larger, more hateful story:

MV: There is some truth in what Chris is saying. Sometimes people will commit a crime and then hide in another country...

Barb: Like the people who helped kill the Jewish people.

MV: Yes. However, most people who come to Canada are not criminals.

David: They could come here to hide because someone thinks they’re a criminal.

MV: That’s true. For example, the priest in the movie you saw might have thought about hiding in another country in order to escape the evil people running the country.

Barb: Like the Sound of Music! The family hid in the mountains so that the father wouldn’t have to go to war.

Lisa: I saw that. I love that movie. That family was really good. Maybe Marisol’s family was like that.

MV: That’s a great example! I love that movie too. Now, there are also tons of people who come to Canada for a lot of other reasons. For example, my parents moved to Canada because, at that time, there weren’t enough teachers and the government invited people from other countries to come to Canada and become teachers. The people who came, actually did Canada a favour. They were doing something for a country that they didn’t even live in.

Barb: That’s interesting.

David: I never thought of that before.

Chris: Ya but, it doesn’t say that Marisol was invited to Canada. They just came.

MV: Yes. The author leaves the reason up to our imagination.

Chris: That sucks! I just want to know. (Interview, May 12, 1998)
Rather than dispute Chris's stance and risk jeopardizing his sense of safety of expression, I provided possible alternatives as reasons for the father's death. I did not want to take on the role of the all-knowing and impose my own views on the participants. After all, since the author does not provide any answers, Chris may have been correct. In the end, Chris was left to believe what he pleased; however, at least he had heard different viewpoints.

Important in the above exchange was the opportunity for students to share shadow-texts. This was especially crucial if we were to identify and challenge each other's stereotypical claims. Unfortunately, this opportunity seldom materialized in the whole-class sessions. The limited scope of the conversations and general agreement of all that was said often denied room for shadow texts. To illustrate this, I refer back to Chris's comment regarding the veil worn by Sauossan's mother. Even though he described the veil as "strange" and "not normal" during our group meeting, at no point in the classroom discussion did Chris refer to clothing (even when some of the students said they would give the family new clothes). There were also several other examples of Chris expounding on his stereotypical beliefs yet remaining silent when the same issue was raised in class. Perhaps he understood that his remark did not fit within the happy mosaic framework advocated by the class. If he did feel at risk injecting this framework with uncomfortable comments, then his words, as well as an opportunity to discuss diversity, were silently lost.

Making Slavery Nice and Easy:

In instances where the two groups (whole-class and critical readers) did enter into a similar topic on racism, their approach continued to be quite different. One such example was our exploration of slavery. The incongruent treatment of slavery between the two groups provides an excellent example of how one topic was explored in contrasting contexts.

For the in-class discussion, I decided to use Hopkinson's (1993), *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*. The story revolves around Clara and her gifted ability to sew. Using information from attempted slave escapes, Clara cleverly sews an escape route to Canada within the design of a quilt right under the noses of her White owners. The quilt successfully leads numerous slaves to the Underground Railroad including Clara herself. Told in an inspiring and heroic tone, the narrative ignores references to the dangers and horrors of attempted escapes. Even the White owners are seen as benevolent and dimwitted. For example, while the slaves quickly realize Clara's plan and slyly drop clues that provide her with geographical information, the White slave owners fail to identify a map to their own surroundings.
The class showed an overwhelming positive response to the story. Most were clearly impressed by Clara’s ingenious plan and happily complied when Sara suggested an art-based activity requiring them to create their own escape quilts. Very little was said about the horrors of slavery or the risk that many slaves encountered in their escape attempts. Whenever I read the book now, the layout reminds me of Banks’ (1998) recollections of one of his old school textbooks:

I was an elementary school student in the Arkansas delta in the 1950s. One of my most powerful memories is the image of the happy and loyal slaves in my social studies textbooks. ...I had several persistent questions throughout my school days: Why were the slaves pictured as happy? Who created this image of the slaves? Why? The image of the happy slaves was inconsistent with everything that I knew about the African American descendants of enslaved people in my segregated community. (p. 4)

Although I had decided to approach the whole-class sessions on a very food and festival level, I did try to initiate conversation regarding a more realistic plight of the slaves. However, when I experienced resistance early on in the lesson, I withdrew and allowed the students to return to their quilt making.

One piece of misinformation that I did wish to support in the classroom is the belief that slavery never flourished in Canada. When I presented an opposing reality to the class, I again experienced resistance. The possibility of slavery in Canada seemed to fly in the face of the pretty mosaic of our multicultural nation hence making little sense to my participants. Several attempted to create disclaimers such as, “It didn’t last as long here,” “they never whip slaves in Canada,” and my favourite, “Black people weren’t slaves in Canada they just worked for little money” (Field notes, May 19, 1998). Although Sara did declare the last comment outrageous, she emphasized the history of the Underground Railroad and other heroic deeds that seemed to make up for the country’s complicity in the slave trade.

My own discussion of slavery with the critical reading group was much more intense. Rather than bringing in a fictional story, I decided upon an exceptional non-fictional work entitled, Trials and Triumphs: The Story of the African-Canadians (Hill, 1993). The text provides a straightforward lesson on the history of racism in Canada, the challenges of individual and institutional racism and the success stories of those who have managed to overcome racially-structured barriers. What I like best about the book is its first sentence: “Black people have lived in Canada for 400 years” (p.7). This immediate shattering of one myth (that anyone non-white is new to the country) is followed by several other actualities
throughout the length of the book. For example, Hill (1993) contests the image of Africa as the Dark Continent delving instead into its long history of fascinating civilizations. He also provides detailed description of slavery in Canada. Yet all of this is unmatched by his educative treatment of the racism that African-Canadians and other black groups still have to endure.

This text is much different from what the critical reading group had read thus far but I felt that it was time to gauge their reaction to a more serious book. Their comments demonstrated a notable change in their ability to understanding the readings as a critical observation of society as a whole:

Lisa: Why weren't they allowed to have go to school?

MV: Well they were allowed to go to school but not to schools that White children attended. They had to have their own schools but the problem was that there weren't a lot of Black teachers to teach in these schools and most White teachers didn't want the jobs. So a lot of times, Black children couldn't go to school even if they really wanted to.

Barb: Wouldn't it be harder to fight racism if you didn't go to school?

MV: That's an interesting point. Explain what you mean.

Barb: Well if you want to grow up and have a job you have to stay in school. But if you never get to go to school, then you can't have a job to make money. And everybody needs things like food so then the person would have to steal and then people would say he steals because he's Black but that's not true. He steals because he has nothing to eat. (Interview, May 20, 1998)

Barb's comment is forever etched in my mind. Although she had made several astute observations in the past, this particular statement demonstrated an understanding of the workings of racism. However, this was just the beginning. Several other moments in this particular discussion stand out in my mind as significant indicators of a forward movement in the understanding of racism.

One such indicator appeared during a discussion on Africville, a long-standing Black community in the north end of Halifax, Nova Scotia. In his description of Africville, Hill relates the many injustices its citizens suffered. These included the horrible conditions under which the Black people lived to how Africville was eventually destroyed against their wishes. After I read this part to the group, David made immediate reference to the degradation that Halifax purposefully heaped on the residents:
David: This part, when it says that the people from the city made them feel bad by moving all of their stuff in garbage trucks, that must have made them feel really bad.

MV: Well their stuff didn’t go to the dump.

David: I know but it makes their things look like garbage, like it’s all dirty.

MV: Why do you think they would do that?

David: To make them feel bad. Maybe to make the Black people feel like their stuff was just garbage. Also, if they feel so bad they might just do what the city people tell them to do because they are too sad to say anything to them.

MV: David, that very...how should I put it...really smart thinking! I'm going to teach you guys a word. It's called disempowered. Anyone know what that means? Well let me put it this way. When Mrs. Simon tells you that you are good at math or reading or whatever and you feel smart and want to try even harder work, that means you are feeling empowered. Like you have the power to do whatever you want. But if Mrs. Simon told you every day that you are stupid, you would feel like you couldn’t do anything and you would feel disempowered. When Halifax destroyed Africville, it was like it was saying, your community is garbage and we are going to throw this garbage out. It disempowered the people who lived there and, like David said, made them too sad to do anything.

Lisa: What about that book about the Indian boy in school and all of the teachers told him he was a dumb Indian. Weren’t they being disempowered to him just because he’s Indian? (Interview, May 20, 1998)

I am sure my mouth fell open when Lisa announced her sudden revelation. Lisa who observed the world through nice vs. mean lenses suddenly had a glimpse of the relationship between race and power. She did not get much further than this but it was certainly a great advancement from where she had started.

**Different Frameworks:**

Throughout the duration of my fieldwork I was puzzled by the incongruent reactions between the whole class and my critical reading group in their approach to the texts. I found it difficult to pinpoint a satisfactory explanation for the different comfort levels in text interactions. Why was my critical reading group willing to reflect on books not attractive in a whole class setting? Even when I provided time to really discuss a text, as suggested by Simon and Armitage-Simon (1991), the class seemed unwilling to participate. Sara believed that the discrepancy was based on group size. She reasoned that the smaller number allowed the students a greater sense of safety in expressing their own opinions when they might not want to
do so in a whole class setting. In this case, size definitely did matter; however, this did not seem sufficient justification for the contrasting results.

If it is true that the focus group activities allowed my participants to gain assurance in expressing thoughts, then it reasons that they would demonstrate their newfound confidence in the classroom. The ability to answer Sara's questions was highly prized by the students and I found it hard to believe that my participants would miss the chance to procure Sara's approval and their peers' envy. Yet this was not the case. In the whole class setting I have very little documentation of my four students contributing new insight to the conversations concerning the books read. This remained true even when my group had already discussed the book being used in the class. High-energy Chris, who had an opinion on almost everything, rarely said a word during our whole-class book conversations. When he did contribute, there was no evidence of the racial stereotyping that he often disclosed in the smaller group; he simply followed the flow of the classroom tone. Barb and David were equally silent. Instead of introducing alternative views to the class conversation (such as the fact that Saoussan's experiences were not that funny), they largely remained silent or agreed with what was being said. I did speak to them about this during different focus group meetings but each simply stated that they did not have anything to say at those particular times (Chris often remarked that the book in question was insipid or tedious and hence, not worth wasting his voice). The only vocal person from my group was Lisa. She appeared quite comfortable rallying for the victims of meanness and often reiterated her comments from one discussion to another. Given the behaviour of my four participants in the different group settings, I was certain that some other factor(s) was influencing the different group reactions. Solving this mysterious became an important question in my research.

By the time I started writing my thesis, I still did not have a satisfactory answer to my mystery. I only found an answer after I stumbled upon Berlak's (1999) article on teaching racism and privilege to culturally diverse classrooms. Berlak's study intrigued me because of the comparisons it held with my own research. In her article, Berlak presents a two-year experience of teaching racism at a university. Each year, she discovered that she had two types of classes; one, which she identifies as easy, the other, difficult. Her labels are based on the level of amiable communication between the various individuals in the class, including herself. Put another way, easy defined the classes that seemed receptive to her views of White privilege and racism while difficult pertained to the classes where students confronted suggestions of
racism and privilege with feelings of antagonism. Her research quest focussed on “how to account for these differences” (Berlak, 1999; p. 100).

In trying to come to term with her experiences, Berlak suggests that most of her students lacked the cognitive frameworks to understand racism and privilege and therefore minimized the pain that resulted from either. This absence of cognitive frameworks required to face racism has also been addressed by Felman and Laub (1992), Simon and Armitage-Simon (1995) and Simon and Eppert (1997), all of whom collectively contend that the general public is unable to make sense of racism because it is outside their realm of understanding. Because there is a “failure of all ready-made discourses” (Felman and Laub, 1992, p.266) to communicate information pertaining to racism, those who encounter injustices may react by developing alternative plots, or “shadow-texts” (Simon and Armitage-Simon, 1995) that fit comfortably into their existing frameworks (Berlak, 1999). I saw such reactions as my students attempted to explain the presence of slaves in Canada without admitting that slavery existed in this country.

Berlak (1999) blames the missing framework on society’s covert agreement to treat racism as “a cultural secret in the sense that it remains largely unfelt, unspoken, and unacknowledged in public discourse, in the media, and in schools and university classrooms” (p. 108). In order to bring people into the conversation about racism, Berlak (1999), Felman and Laub (1992), Simon and Armitage-Simon (1995) and Simon and Eppert (1997) all contend that individuals need to disclose the secret by “witnessing” and “bearing witness” to racist events. Put another way, there needs to be an “aware[ness] of the dehumanization [of racism]…a corporal encounter with victimization” (Berlak, 1999, p.106). Witnessing can be first hand through personal victimization or second hand, “when perpetrators or bystanders become imaginatively capable of perceiving the victims’ trauma in their own bodies – gaining the power of sight, of insight” (Berlak, 1999, p.106). Given Berlak’s (1999) definition of second hand witnessing, it seemed reasonable to me to consider multicultural children’s literature as a possible means of imagining another person’s victimization. However, since being a witness can be traumatic (Simon & Eppert, 1997); candidates often resist the process, reticent to the idea of challenging a fundamental understanding of their society (Berlak, 1999; Felman & Laub, 1992; Simon & Eppert, 1997). So if multicultural children’s literature were utilized as a means of witnessing, it would have to be approached in a manner that would help relive the trauma brought on by the new experience.
In many ways, the theory of missing cognitive frameworks helped me address some of the blanks in my own research. The first thing that intrigued me was Berlak’s (1999) notion that the absence of the frameworks is due to a secret social covenant to shroud racism. Given what I have encountered in my experiences in trying to engage the local school boards in a discussion on racism, I am inclined to believe Berlak’s argument. The board’s reluctance to employ multicultural curriculum as well as establish anti-racist school policies has continually been predicated on the assumption that racism is not a problem in Eastern Canada. Other institutions (such as the business sector, municipalities, and justice) and their similar rejection of the extent to which racism injures all Maritimers, helps to solidify the cultural secret. Since “frames for cognition are…culturally and socially generated…gained from our frames of social experience” (Berlak, 1999, p. 106), it is not surprising that my students seemed initially unprepared to discuss a topic that their society largely negates.

Secondly, the suggestion of a missing framework provided me with hope, hope that with extensive discussion, a more comprehensive and informed framework could be introduced to the students. I found this possibility more convincing than the Simon and Armitage-Simon (1995) stance that some books are too risky for the classroom (a position similar to Sara’s belief that her students were too young to participate in complex discussions on racism). When choosing potential texts, Simon and Armitage-Simon (1995) argue that “a central question that any teacher or parent has to confront when deciding whether to encourage and support the reading of these texts is whether or not they are too graphic, too emotionally manipulative, and/or too focused on scenes of violence, cruelty, destructiveness and suffering (p. 27).” I find this directive problematic as it can too easily be used to satisfy any specific political agenda. For example, it has been argued that students should not veer away from the traditional Eurocentric cannon as it may cause distress or threaten national unity (Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987). Similarly, educators may warn against books about the Holocaust as they may upset the students. If all books that ran the risk of bothering someone became suspect, our memories of significant events could quickly fade away. My personal conclusion is not that particular texts should be avoided, as Simon and Simon-Armitage (1995) suggest, but rather efforts should be made to align text and context so that they compliment each other in effectiveness. Along with time and place, the context should also include the type of conceptual framework in operation.

In other words, Cheyenne Again (Bunting, 1995) was not a risky text inappropriate for my participants, rather it was presented before these students had the skills to critically discuss it. In the focus group, the students were provided with different conditions for discussion. They
had the opportunity for dialogue and the time to work out their thoughts. This allowed us to discuss the story with less distress.

**The Dominant Framework:**

To say that my students did not have an understanding of racism would be false. Indeed, most appeared to have very clear opinions on the topic and were quite willing to expound on their ideas. However, these conditions only held true while we operated within their established framework; a framework best defined by Harper's (1997) “inviting diversity – celebrating diversity” phase. As I continually explored my data, I realized that the cognitive framework under which most of my participants were operating permitted them to understand racism only to particular limits. When discussions threatened to go beyond these limits, they withdrew from the conversation. This withdrawal helped to explain why I initially had problems connecting with the class.

The framework on racism as developed by my participants had been largely formed by past experiences. These include parental interactions, school curriculum, media messages and an array of other sources of information from which we form our beliefs and values. The dominant directive regarding racism is that it represents “individual acts” (McIntosh, 1990) of meanness which most of us do not choose to be part of. Notions of institutionalized racism and White privilege are not part of the prevailing portrayal of racism. Put in our national context, the framework is akin to the following: racism is perpetrated by the few who are threatened by the Canadian mosaic; the rest of us live in harmony in a multicultural society that is tolerant of diversity. My participants demonstrated their acceptance of this popular belief through their embracing of texts that underscored this precept and a rejection of those that did not.

*If the Book Fits, Read it:*

If I were to categorize the books accepted by the whole class group, I would place them under the following headings: the innocuous, the funny, and the solvable. The innocuous refers to the books that present diversity without the manifestation of any resulting conflicts. These would include texts in which the illustrations portrayed diversity but the plot subject dealt with something else. Several of the Robert Munsch books that we used would be included in this section in that many of his main characters are non-white.

The funny would be comprised of books in which issues of diversity are portrayed in a humourous manner. *From Far Away* (Munsch, 1995) is an example of how the tone undermined any exploration of racism and alienation. When this book was discussed in class the students focussed on the entertaining aspect of the young girl’s confusion. Attention to the
more serious ramifications of her situation only occurred within the critical reading group. In both the first two categories, racism is either a low or non-issue. Emphasis may be on people’s different experiences but even this is limited. Consequently, texts in these categories encourage a benign interaction with diversity. While such books hold their own merit, it is necessary to advance to riskier texts so that the conversation surrounding issues of racism and diversity can evolve from mere conversation to engaged action.

References to racism are more evident in the third category. The solvable refers to books where justice triumphs over racism. The conquest may result from individual courage (such as Clara’s escape from slavery) or from an individual’s realization that his or her racist behaviour is wrong. Later in this chapter, I describe a book entitled, Angel Child, Dragon Child (Surat, 1983). In this story, a White boy racially harasses a young Vietnamese girl. However, once he gets to know her better, he transforms himself into her best friend. In texts such as this one, the complexities and lasting impact of racism are not acknowledged. Furthermore, the racist behaviour is portrayed as an individual’s endeavor. My participants’ belief in this precept was reinforced by Sara’s frequent comments such as, “Unfortunately, there are still people who think it is fine to treat people badly because of the colour of their skin or because of their religion. When we meet people like this we need to make them understand that this is not acceptable thinking” (Field notes, May 7, 1998). The consequent repositioning of racism as a personal act, rather than part of a greater schema of privilege and power, allowed students a comfortable distance from their own profiting of the system thus making such books more palatable (Beach, 1996).

My participants enjoyed the books that fell into these categories because they reinforced rather than challenged their ideas about racism and diversity: it is easy for us to all get along, racism is bad, and racism is an individual act that we can collectively condone. Texts which caused them discomfort, such as Cheyenne Again (Bunting, 1995), did not prescribe to these beliefs. The plot was incongruent with my participants’ framework on racism making them unwilling to discuss this book.

Of particular interest is the power of a dominant framework to suppress dialogue. As I have already noted, my critical reading group rarely contributed an opposing perspective in the whole class format even though they often disagreed with each other during focus group conversations. In the class, they either made comments that maintained the status quo or remained silent. Lisa continued to be a vocal participant in the class; this can be explained by the fact that her mean vs. nice position echoed the class’ dominant framework. However,
after she began to engage in more complex thinking, she never contributed these critical thoughts in the class but remained within the accepted dialogue. Sara and I were equally culpable. For when we detected the students' discomfort with the texts, we retreated until a comfortable space was located. The alternative action of helping them increase their framework was only given fleeting attention. Instead we provided greater exposure to the perspectives of diversity to which they were already accustomed. This may help to explain why educators sometimes test the waters by using multicultural literature but withdraw when they encounter an unfavourable response. A suggested solution for this scenario would be the greater preparation of beginning teachers in dealing with issues of diversity (Gollick, 1992; Villegas, 1991). Arming new teachers with the tools for challenging pre-existing frameworks and presenting new ones is essential if they are to facilitate critical thinking in their future students.

But What About the Critical Reading Group?

My hypothesis of the limiting effects of a dominant framework is only plausible if it can also explain the progress that I made in the critical reading group. Why were these students, who were operating under the same framework as their peers, willing to go beyond the borders of their current understanding of diversity and navigate lesser-known terrain?

A suggested challenge to pre-existing frameworks is the use of literature (Banks, 1994; Beach, 1996; Berlak, 1999; Felman & Laub, 1992; Simon & Armitage-Simon, 1995). Felman and Laub (1992) argue that "what is distinctive about literature and the visual arts [which I contend include book illustrations] is that they do more than simply report facts, but make us encounter the 'strangeness' that can usually only be conveyed by first-hand witnesses" (p.7). Giroux's (1991) definition of literacy suggests similar use of literature to help generate discoveries "of uncertainty that makes dialogue and debate possible" (p. xvi). Similarly, Freire (1970) contends that literacy allows us to "come to a new awareness of selfhood and begin to look critically at the social situation in which they find themselves" (p. 9). Both groups however, were exposed to multicultural children's literature. So again, the question is why the different reactions?

Although both groups were exposed to multicultural children's literature, it is the subsequent treatment of the literature that marked the differences in response. Simon and Armitage-Simon (1995) present this argument in their observation that "the stories a teacher chooses to use, the preparation students have before hearing stories, and the accountability teachers demand of students' engagements, will all affect how students mediate the disruptions
posed by the text” (p. 30). In the classroom, dialogue took on the form of a choral reading, with all agreeing that racism is bad. Any conflicting “shadow texts” (Simon & Armitage-Simon, 1995) were invisible, existing in the minds of the students but not their words. Within the focus group, dialogue took on the form of debate, with students attempting to provide reasoning for the often-unfair plots.

As I have stated elsewhere in this chapter, the extent to which I could communicate with the different groups had a direct impact on my progress in expanding their frameworks and engaging them in risky texts. In challenging dominant frameworks, Berlak (1999) suggests inviting students in informed communication facilitated by an “addressable other who...can provoke access to...the crisis through dialogue, for experience is not simply registered but produced through social exchange” (p. 107). Such a discourse could then help individuals question their current notions and develop new cognitive frameworks necessary to understand racism and its impact on society as a whole. In many ways, I was the knowable other identified by Berlak. Not just because of my personal experience with racism but also because of the training I have received in discussing these issues.

I should underline that the focus group’s movement to a critical understanding of the texts and their world was not easy, nor was it complete when I finally left. My four participants still demonstrated tendencies to sometimes accept ideas without questions. Berlak (1999) makes the comment that initially she preferred her easy classes because they were less confrontational. Only in retrospect did she realize that her difficult classes had achieved a greater understanding of racial issues. I had a similar experience. My whole class sessions were quite enjoyable. The students were lively and our follow-up activities (such as making our own freedom quilt) were usually a lot of fun. The critical reading group was definitely more of a challenge. On paper, the smaller group’s journey looks clear and simple. In reality, it was fraught with potholes, detours, and cul de sacs returning us to a pre-occupied spot. Nor did they all travel at the same speed. Rather, my participants often arrived at different locations at differing times. However, the opportunity for critical dialogue eventually made the difference. Our sometimes-painful discussions helped provide skills for critical literacy, which in turn, promoted opportunities to discuss diversity, challenge stereotypes and eventually, expand on whom they believed could be Canadian.

**On A Final Note:**

I thought I would use the final reading for both groups to underline their use of particular frameworks as well as provide a sense of where they were in their thinking as the
year ended. For the final texts, I decided that I would use a different book for each of my two groups. I did this because, after four months, my two groups were at very different places in their approach to discussing diversity. As this was my last visit for the academic year, I wanted to choose texts that would leave a lasting impression on the students. I believed this was accomplished.

Critical Readings for a Critical Group:

For the critical reading group, I wanted something that encouraged complex thinking, not just stir their feelings of right and wrong. I finally decided upon Margaret Wild's (1991), A Time For Toys. The selection, stood in exception to the rest of my text set for a variety of reasons. Most notable, was the fact that the story was quite obviously not set in Canada. As I noted in chapter 1, a requirement of my text set was that all of the included books must tell stories that could occur in Canada. At face value, this book promised little in its ability to educate children on the diversity of the Canadian identity. Furthermore, the theme of diversity is neither mentioned in the text nor demonstrated in the illustrations (as all of the characters are white-skinned and Jewish). The theme of difference was subtle and embedded in the background context of the story. So why did I chose this book?

As my own thinking on multicultural children's literature evolved, I began to realize that the foundation of developing a Canadian identity inclusive of diversity involves understanding diversity in any context. It is not just about meeting the stranger in our own land but also considering the plight of the strangers in any land. In other words, to expand empathy beyond our own borders. The ability to think critically about how people are unfairly treated, regardless of their location, could only enhance the chances of appreciating diversity in our own surroundings.

My chosen book certainly engaged the students in a discussion of diversity far more removed from their lives than the pluralistic reality of Canada. The book relates a young girl's narrative of a group of Jewish women's secret endeavor to make children's toys during their captivity in a Nazi concentration camp. Like other powerful books, the simple words are married to disturbing images, startling in their realistic depiction of camp internees. On the surface, the story is relatively benign. A young voice vacillates between the excitement of a secret party planned for the children and the wistful memory of a time filled with toys, a home, parents, and food. However, existing between the lines is the presence of something evil, the evidence of some unspoken tragedy. Knowledge of the horrifying time in which this story is situated is what that makes it so disturbing.
My participants were familiar with the Holocaust and identified it as the backdrop to this book. Most of the discussion around the book referred to topics such as tone, point of view and illustrations; subjects not related to my study. However, their attempts to comprehend the subject of the book, i.e. the Holocaust, demonstrated a significant development of thought regarding power and race:

Lisa: I can’t believe that happened. Didn’t the police stop them?

MV: Well, Hitler was like the head of the country. He made the laws and it was a law to hate Jewish people. In fact, if you tried to help a Jewish person, you were breaking the law and could go to jail. He told everyone in Germany that the Jewish people were evil and greedy and that they needed to get rid of them in order to have a good country.

Lisa: And people believed him? Why?

MV: Can anyone answer that?

(long silence)

Barb: I think it might be like being a slave. You know how everyone thought it was o.k. to have slaves even though it wasn’t right.

Lisa: Ya, just like Hitler, if you tried to help a slave, you could go to jail because it was against the law.

Barb: Because almost everyone thought the slaves weren’t human or something like them. Maybe like Hitler, well if he told lots of people and then suddenly everyone thought the same as him and thought it was o.k. if the Jewish people got sent away.

MV: I want to touch on what Barb said about not being human. She’s right but why would Hitler, or slaves’ owners, not want to think of the Jewish and Black people as not being human beings?

(long silence)

David: Because then you can be mean to them?

Lisa: I don’t understand.

MV: Can you explain more?

David: Well, Remember when you said that the people who owned slaves didn’t feel bad about owning them because they didn’t think they were as good as them. About how, you know..when you think you are better than ...O.K. let’s say that you were black...
Lisa: She's not black!

David: I know that. I was pretending... so if you were black and I treated you bad because I thought I was better because I'm white. So if a lot of people thought that then all of the black people would be in trouble.

Barb: Because if you think that someone is not a human being and they don't have feelings like you do then you can treat them badly without feeling bad yourself.

Lisa: But they are human beings. Look at them. What else could they be?

Barb: I think it's like thinking someone is bad so you can be mean to them. My mom says that if you do mean things, people will do mean things back to you because they will think you deserve it. Maybe people thought the Jewish people deserved to be treated so bad because they were mean and had no feelings.

MV: You have some interesting insights, Barb.

Lisa: I just don't understand how people could do that.

MV: Well, Hitler didn't just start big and say, "O.K. tomorrow we are going to kill a whole bunch of people." He started slowly. First, he did things like put posters up that told lies about Jewish people. And slowly, people began to believe those lies until almost everyone believed everything he said.

Chris: Why didn't they just leave. My dad says that all Jewish people have a lot of money.

MV: Well not all Jewish people have a lot of money. They are like any other group. Some people are rich and some aren't.

Lisa: That's a stereotyping.

MV: Lisa's right. Thinking that an entire group is the same is stereotyping. Some Jewish people escaped but you know, they didn't believe this could happen. If I told you that the Prime Minister was going to pass a law saying that everyone with red hair was going to be arrested, you wouldn't believe me.

David: I would now.

MV: Well most people wouldn't because we can't imagine someone being so evil.

Barb: Then it could happen again.
MV: Well, yes. But only if you believe things without thinking about what you are believing. Just because someone says, all people from Saint John are bad, doesn’t mean you have to believe them without any proof.

Lisa: That’s like when Mrs. Simon said she was at a store and the person working in the store was mean to the guy with a mohawk because he looked weird.

David: And even Ying, when kids think he is dumb because of the way he looks.

MV: Those are really good examples of how people who seem different because of their clothes, their religion, or their skin colour can get treated badly. Now, let’s talk about the book. (Interview, June 12, 1998)

As I ended the first phase with my participants, I sensed that my students were beginning to think about the unthinkable. They had made brief links to other similar incidents of persecution indicating that they were capable of placing this lesson into a wider, more personal context. They also demonstrated their growing ability to understand how thinking can be manipulated in order to justify the persecution of those different from us.

When is it Hard to Hate?

The last book that I used with the entire class (but not within the critical reading group context) was Michele Surat’s (1993) Angel Child, Dragon Child. Surat’s book is an example of the type of anti-racist story that did not seem to bother the class. In this story, a White boy bullies Ut, a young girl who recently arrived from Vietnam. At the climax, Ut attacks her nemesis, Raymond, sending both to the principal. The principal in turn places them in a room and instructs Ut to dictate her life story, which Raymond must record in writing. This exchange exposes Raymond to the hardships faced by Ut and engenders in him the determination to help Ut re-unite her family. With his leadership and ideas, Ut’s family is brought together. Of course, Raymond and Ut become friends thus giving the book a happy ending. I had already used several books with such successful conclusions and knew that this story would end our year on a feel-good note.

If success can be measured in participation, then this book was a good choice. The students seemed engaged in the story line and willing to provide their opinions on the plot. In contrast to the class’s usual discomfort with books containing overt racism, my participants eagerly partook in the follow-up discussion. Although I read the book, Sara initiated the discussion leaving me free to take notes. Eventually, she directed the conversation to the most obvious theme of the book – racism:
Sara has just asked them if Raymond's behaviour at the beginning of the book is acceptable. The students unanimously condone Raymond's behaviour as racist and similarly, express approval with his sudden change of heart. Sara asks if any of them would behave like Raymond, to which they reply with various forms of no. She then asks what they would do if they went to Raymond's school and hands shoot up as each student attempts to outdo the other with suggestions of kindness towards Ut. I notice that no one suggests dealing with Raymond. Within minutes, the students are a bundle of energy. They are obviously pleased that they have answers to Sara's questions. However, when Sara asked them to explain why the principal's idea of Ut telling Raymond her story worked, the hands fall and the energy diffuses into a hush of shifting papers and shuffling feet. They have no idea. One student attempts to solve this Rosetta Stone by suggesting, "Because if they didn't get along, the principal wouldn't let them go home?" Sara shakes her head and says "Come on group, think." Finally, Barb from my critical reading group cautiously raises her hand, and in a quiet voice says, "I think it is hard to make fun of someone when you know that they are sad." Sara accepts this answer and the momentarily stilled-energy is reengaged as students provide different interpretations of Barb's response. "It's important to think about how someone else would feel," says on student. Another quotes the golden rule. Soon, students are supplying similar insights at such a rate that I can't write them all down. (Field notes, June 18, 1998)

Wearing Another Person's Sneakers – the Simple and the Complex:

Compare the last meeting of each group and it becomes evident that, despite the difference in texts, the two discussions ended on the same note – the importance of wearing another person's sneakers. In the whole class forum, the students witnessed racial tensions resolved through the act of hearing the stranger's story. Because their discussion was much more sophisticated, the critical reading group also considered the implications of knowing the stranger as well as the implications in choosing not to. The complexity of thought articulated in the focus group is far removed from the suggestions of kindness spoken of by the entire class. However, each suggests the possibility of hope, hope that my participants were beginning to understand the diversity that is quickly becoming a fabric of their society.

So Which Model Works?

Since the dominant question of my thesis revolves around students' perceptions of the Canadian citizen, it is to this inquiry that I return. Both of the models and frameworks that I used in the study provided interesting data. Both allowed the students a particular type of dialogue. Yet one final question still remained: which model achieved the greatest success in facilitating a broader image of the Canadian citizen?

The next chapter deals with these concerns and then returns to the larger questions that I posed at the beginning of this text.
CHAPTER VII—THE JOURNEY OF MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

The Original Questions:

In this chapter, the original questions posed at the beginning of this research journey are brought forth for a final consideration. As stated in chapter 1, these questions are: How do children from predominately-White locations define Canadian? What affect does the use of multicultural children’s literature have on their perceptions?

The first question regarding the students’ definition of Canadian was addressed in chapter 5, which revealed the perimeters of the students’ images regarding the Canadian citizen prior to exposure to the multicultural texts. As demonstrated through various activities and interviews, an overwhelming majority of the students recognized the Canadian as white-skinned and Anglo-Saxon. This understanding was largely unconscious for when questioned directly as to whether or not anyone could be a Canadian; the answer was a consistent, “Yes.” However, data collected through more indirect means conveyed a different story. The students’ drawings and casual comments suggested that their image of the Canadian prescribed to a particular portrayal regarding skin colour, religion, language, and even accent. Ultimately, the Canadian looked like them – White, English and Christian.

Considering the participants’ environment and experiences, their image of a Canadian could not be completely unanticipated. In fact, it can be argued that it is unfair to expect these children to have a broader understanding of the Canadian considering that they are, as Banks’ (1989) puts it, “ethnically-encapsulated.” Nevertheless, it is this very expectation of results that augments the legitimacy and urgency for the need to educate children living in such an environment. Although the prevalent philosophy of West End School’s school board is that the low visible minority population negates the need for cross-cultural education (see chapter 1), the attitudes of the students represented by this school board cry out for the opposite stance.

Canadians are White but Canada is Multicultural:

Ironically, the students’ notions of a Canadian did not undermine their recognition of Canada as a multicultural country. When asked through both direct and indirect questions of what it means to live in a multicultural country, the students articulated a description of Canada as a nation comprised of diversity and difference. In fact, many truly believed that they not only lived in a multicultural country but in a multicultural city as well. I discovered this discrepancy when I spoke to the students about their level of contact with people of other races. Several replied that they did communicate with other races, making references to the fact that
they listened to rap music or had an email pal living in another country. One student assured me that he did indeed interact with people of different races and proved his point by noting, “I wear the same basketball sneakers as Michael Jordan.” (Field notes, April 23, 1998). Another student described Lakeville as a multicultural city and supported her claim with the observation, “there are two black people who work at the mall; you see them all the time” (Field notes, April 27, 1998).

The inclusion of media, technology, and pop culture as evidence of immediate visible diversity is interesting. Various researchers (Banks, 1993; Diaz, 1993; Howard, 1993) have discussed mindfulness to present-day globalization and the subsequent need to be able to work with others. The proposition, however, that technology has allowed citizens to be in touch with diversity through virtual contact has not yet received a lot of consideration. Technology, like literature, may be a way to produce borders for students to cross.

**Multiculturalism is Valuable:**

Not only did my participants believe that they live in a multicultural city but they were also able to interpret a value for diversity. For example, in the following interview segment, my critical reading group demonstrate an understanding of how Canada benefits from pluralism:

Lisa: You know what’s strange. Both Saoussan and Marisol came to Canada when their country had a war.

MV: That is an excellent observation, Lisa. Can anyone guess why they came here?

Lisa: Because it’s close?

Barb: I believe that Lebanon, where Saoussan is from, is far away.

Chris: Ya, that’s why the book is called, *From Far Away!* Jeez… My dad says that everyone wants to come to Canada because they come here for free and the government takes care of them.

MV: How?

Chris: I don’t know.

Lisa: No one took care of Saoussan and Marisol except their parents. That’s a dumb idea.

Barb: Maybe they knew that Canada already has a lot of people living here that came from somewhere else.
MV: Is it a good thing to have a country where a lot of people have come from somewhere else?

(long silence)

Barb: I think so because maybe there is a problem that I can't fix but then Michael comes and says, “Well in Germany, we did it like this” and then the problem gets solved. This really happened. I was having problems with dividing and he showed me a trick that his teacher showed him in his old school in Germany. Now I can do it.

David: Mrs. Simon always says to get more than one opinion on projects because different ideas are better than everyone having the same idea. Maybe it is the same thing. With lots of people from different countries living in Canada, we can get a lot of opinions.

Barb: Plus, I always find it interesting when Mrs. Simon talks about being Jewish. Her stories are so interesting. They really get my imagination going.

Lisa: Ya, like when she brought in that big candlestick holder for Hanukah.
(Interview, May 12, 1998)

Some of my participants also connected multiculturalism with economics. This is evident in the following interview piece in which Chris explains how diversity can be good business:

MV: What type of character would your person play?

Chris: A good person.

MV: Why?

Chris: Before in the movies, like the Black people were all bad. Now they play the good ones too. If I was Black I wouldn't want to go see a movie that made me look like a bad person. If I made a movie, I would make sure one good person is Black so that Black people would come see it.

Lisa: Why would you want Black people to come see it?

Chris: Because they have money too, duh! (Interview, January 15, 1998)

I found it very interesting that Chris was the one to create a link between profit and diversity considering that he was constantly relating how his father believed immigrants and minorities to be a drain on the economy.
On one level, defining multiculturalism as a commodity is not problematic. Certainly, workshops and articles on diversity in the workplace often portray the appreciation of plurality as an economic bonus. Furthermore, part of the reason for preparing children for diversity is so that they will be able to work with anyone in a productive manner (Banks, 1993; Diaz, 1993; Howard, 1993). Recognizing this, it is also important for citizens to welcome diversity even when the benefits are not synonymous with monetary profit. This argument was something that I tried to get my participants to consider along with economic value. With this in mind, I posed the option of including diversity in all movies regardless of who would be viewing it. Chris was the least open to this idea arguing, “I don’t see the point of going to all that work if no one Black is going to see the movie” (Interview, January, 15, 1998). At the end of our time together, Chris showed signs of being able to reconsider this statement.

The students’ appreciation for diversity was also observable in their actions. In chapter 5, I described the class Christmas party during which most of the students brought gifts for Sara. Several of the students made a special effort to present her with a Hanukah gift demonstrating their knowledge of her background. Also, they did not appear surprised on the rare occasions when a student behaved according to his/her particular cultural or religious beliefs. For example, I asked Sara if the students ever asked why the Jehovah Witness student never stood for the national anthem. She replied, “No. I really send home the message that we all have special ways of doing things and sometimes this is because of our different religions or cultures. In fact if a student does do something out of the ordinary, the others probably assume that it has to do with religion even when it doesn’t” (Interview, November 10, 1998).

On the surface, it appeared that a dichotomous situation existed. On one hand, my participants imagined all Canadians to be White and Anglo-Saxon. On the other hand, they recognized Canada as a multicultural country and admitted that anyone could be a Canadian. Upon closer analysis of the data, the contradiction dissolved and a multi-layer approach to the Canadian identity emerged.

Me Canadian; You Immigrant:

As I reviewed the field notes and interviews, I realized that whenever racial and religious minorities were discussed in the context of being Canadian, there was always an assumption of immigration. In other words, according to students’ views, some Canadians may be non-white or non-Anglo-Saxon but these people were born elsewhere and became Canadian citizens upon entry into the country. The students’ drawings reinforced these beliefs; the few students who did draw non-white Canadians consistently presented them as immigrants. Only
Barb, Lisa, and David, in the second year of the study, moved away from this assumption by assigning non-white individuals with Canadian-born status. For the rest of the class, White Canadians were citizens by birthright; whereas non-whites were originally immigrants with the Canadian identity conferred on them legally. Sara’s comments regarding her students’ beliefs also suggested this division:

S: Take Ying for instance, he is originally from China, he was born in China. They understand that he came from China. But I asked them, “When Ying grows up and perhaps will marry here, and he may even have kids, won’t those kids be Canadian?” They weren’t sure. I told them that his kids would be Canadian. But it is difficult for them. Their minds still work in one direction. They still have trouble understanding that you can be a different faith or a different colour and still be Canadian. It’s sometimes difficult to get this message across but it’s an important one so I have to keep trying. (Interview, June 3, 1998)

This differentiation between inherited and legally conferred citizenship is immediately problematic. Although thousands of non-white immigrants enter Canada every year, thousands are also white. Furthermore, several visible and invisible minority communities in Canada enjoy multi-generation roots in this nation speaking to more than just the immigrant experience. The creation of two different types of Canadians allows one to appear legitimate while the other retains the status of a stranger.

As I noted in chapter 4, discussion regarding the stranger was an integral part of my conceptual framework. Emphasis was placed on trying to imagine the stranger as the bearer of new ideas rather than the intruder or dangerous unknown. The students seemed willing to entertain such an argument but halted at the supposition that the stranger could become so entrenched in the community that he/she would eventually shed the identity of the foreigner. Instead, the label of stranger remained fixed, translating into the message that one may come and be among Canadians but never truly become one.

In discussing the immutable station of the stranger, Julia Kristeva (1991) suggests that the identity is a defense mechanism, allowing us to transfer the fear of the unknown within ourselves onto other people:

Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity flounder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns “we” into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible, the foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities. (p. 2)
Kristeva's last observation, that the foreigner disappears when we see the alien within ourselves, is compelling. Although my participants were willing to accept non-whites as Canadians (in a limited capacity), they demonstrated considerable reluctance to perceive their own families, and race, as previous immigrants to the country. Their image of the Canadian did broaden to include more diverse characteristics; however, their portrayal of the immigrant as a dark-skinned foreigner remained rigid. By narrowly defining the immigrant and providing non-whites with restricted access to the Canadian identity, the students may have been articulating a type of white fright regarding a changing national identity. Kristeva's "him within ourselves" (1991, p. 2) can be understood as a metaphor for a fear of diversity (him) within our national identity (ourselves). Once the foreign quality within ourselves (our immigrant identity) is recognized, the stranger (the fear of diversity) in our community (national image) disappears. This may appear to be sophisticated thinking for children but it could be the result of phobic messages conveyed by such sources as the media, curriculum, and family. Sara provided me with evidence of such thinking when she noted that a student had asked her, "Is it true that pretty soon everyone in Canada will look and speak Chinese?" (Interview, Feb. 13, 1998)

The Impact of Multicultural Children's Literature:

The second question, which explores the affect that multicultural children's literature has on influencing students' perceptions of the Canadian identity, must be viewed from two perspectives. This is because I used two different approaches to the texts — a food and festival model versus critical reading. Furthermore, this larger question was sub-divided into four specific questions aimed at understanding particular aspects of the genre. To present this data in a comprehensible manner, I will first discuss the results from the exercises conducted during year two of my study. Then, each of the four questions will be stated and answered based on task data as well as information presented throughout this thesis.

redoing the Activities:

In chapter 5, I described a series of tasks that I conducted with all of the students. In year two, I reenacted some of these activities. My objective was to determine two things: 1) the difference in attitude before and after exposure to the texts and 2) the longevity of the texts' influence. In year one, all the students completed the tasks prior to being introduced to my multicultural text set. Therefore, all participants were judged as being on equal ground and were all part of one category — the pre-exposure group. In the second year of the study, the
students fell into one of three different categories; affiliation was based on their prior experience with the texts. Group A consisted of the four students from the critical reading group. Students who were in Sara’s grade 4 section the previous year and in her grade 5 section the second year fell into group B. This was the group that interacted with the texts at the first two levels of Banks’ model (1989). Group C was made up of the new grade 4 students who were not in Sara’s class the previous year and did not have any prolonged interaction with the multicultural texts.

Create a Character:

This particular exercise involved each student receiving a headshot of a Canadian. Their assignment consisted of creating a fictional biography based on their picture. As I noted in chapter 5, in year one all of the students who received pictures of a white individual described their character either as Canadian, American, or British. In contrast, every child who had a picture of a visible minority cast their character in the role of the immigrant. Discussions with the students left the clear impression that decisions regarding citizenship were based on race (see chapter 5).

In year two, the results from the activity were consistent within the group yet differed between the groups. All four Group A students received pictures of non-white individuals; similarly, all identified their characters as Canadian. Barb, Lisa, and David further developed their characters by providing a description that went beyond the immigrant experience. The following are excerpts:

Picture of a Japanese-Canadian woman:

Even though Ming Ling’s family lived in Canada a long time, they had to live in a camp during the war. This is because the police thought the Japanese in Canada were enemies. Her family lost a lot of things, even their house. But everyone in her family is smart and they all went to university; so soon they could live in a house again. Ming Ling is a teacher now and she teaches her students to be good to everyone and not to be afraid of people who are different. (Barb)

Picture of a Black man:

Bob lives in Toronto but he was born in Nova Scotia. His job is to make drawings of tall buildings for offices and houses. Bob lives in one of the buildings that he drew and he is very proud of himself. ...Sometimes famous people in Hollywood call Bob to see if he will draw them a house. But he always says that he only makes houses in Canada and doesn’t want to spend time anywhere else. Bob is really nice. (Lisa)
Carol has had a very interesting life. She grew up in P.E.I. but moved to Halifax to become an actor. But then she decided she didn’t like acting and wanted to become a doctor. She went to Dalhousie University. Carol’s parents are very proud of her and told her that she can be anything she wants to be. She wants to be a doctor and then go to other countries to help children who are hurt in different wars. ... Carol once told the teacher that a bully was calling her names because of her skin colour. Her teacher made the bully do a project with Carol and then they were friends. (David)

The above entries stand in contrast to those created by the same students the previous year. For one thing, assumptions of poverty have been replaced by assertions of success. Each character is not only Canadian but also a Canadian capable of contributing to greater society. Both Barb and David created scenarios (the camps and bullying) similar to those in books read the year before. Of all the biographies in all three groups, these two students were the only ones who made any reference to racism.

Chris’s biography differed from his peers. Although he too made his character Canadian, he continued to rely on the non-white as immigrant stereotype. In the previous year, Chris created Mumumbo, an African male aspiring to come to Canada. His second creation described an East Indian man running a convenience story; Chris borrowed this characterization from the television show, The Simpsons. Within his description, Chris wrote, “Abu has just arrived from India but is doing well because he is very smart” (Field notes, Nov. 13, 1998). Although Chris’s entry suggests that he is still more receptive to stereotypes and media messages than the other group members, it does lack the suspicious voice he used the year before when referring to immigrants.

Group B’s biographies also demonstrated a change in attitude but not to the extent of group A. Of the remaining nine left from the original class (the grade 5s had gone on to grade 6 and were not part of this group), five continued to rely on racial features and stereotypes as a premise for their descriptions. The four students with White individuals all made their characters Canadian, while the one with a non-white individual made his character Japanese. Three students described their non-white individual as new Canadians. One student with a white individual designated her character as born and living in Australia. Consequently, even though some of these students were willing to broaden their notion of a Canadian, their expanded perspectives were conditional upon conferring the non-white Canadians with new citizenship status only.
Group C was not part of the study the previous year and thus had very little experience with multicultural texts compared to the other two groups. Their attitudes mimicked the results that their classmates had shown the year before. Out of the twelve participating students, each one relied on the person's race as an indicator for national identification. In explaining their biographies, students made such observations as: "he just looked Chinese," "She's White so she has to be Canadian or maybe from the States," and "He looks like the Indian guy from The Simpsons so I made him Indian" (November 13, 1998).

**Draw Me A...:**

Results of this activity were similar to the Create a Character task. In year one, 23/23 drew a Canadian as white and 23/23 drew a dark-skinned immigrant. In year two, group A results were split with Barb and David drawing non-white Canadians while Lisa and Chris portrayed their Canadian as white. When asked to draw an immigrant. Only Barb drew a white immigrant. Group B also showed promise with 3/9 drawing their Canadians as non-white. However, once again 9/9 drew non-white immigrants. Group C presented results of 11/11 drawing white Canadians and 11/11 creating dark immigrants. Collectively, my participants seemed more willing to expand their notion of the Canadian than to do so with their image of the immigrant. However, the continual casting of the immigrant in a darker skin, set limitations on the extent to which non-White Canadians could truly be citizens with a long-standing history in this country.

**Rating History:**

This activity was slightly different in its intent in that it measured the contributions and hardships of various groups as perceived by the students. In the first year, students gave the greatest attention to large events such as Donovan Bailey's Olympic record, their provinces' role as one of the founding members of Confederation and the writing of "Oh Canada." Little interest was given to issues of civil rights, women's history, or immigrant contributions.

In year two, each member of the critical reading group marked the Underground Railroad as either the first or second most significant event. Similarly residential schools were rated as one of the top five events in importance. Interestingly, two of our most serious critical group discussions had to do with these two topics. The third subject that seemed to move the critical reading group was the Chinese contribution to the building of the railroad. This topic moved into the top ten events but at a different place for each student.

Group B revealed results similar to group A in that the Chinese railroad workers, residential schools and the Underground Railroad all became part of the top ten entries among
the overall group. However, it should be noted that these three events were consistently in the higher end of the top ten rather than first in importance as identified by group A. Group C showed little interest in diversity issues and, like their counterparts the year before, chose large events such as W.W. II and the introduction of paper money as group favourites.

What the students did not rate in the top ten became as significant as what they did rate as such. Although students from both A and B demonstrated a new understanding of various groups’ situations, they showed little concern for issues not covered in our multicultural text set. For example, none of my books discussed the Acadian expulsion or the denial of voting rights for Aboriginal people. Even though these are issues of particular local importance (see media review), the students did not seem interested in them. Both were left off of every students’ top ten list.

So What?:

Once the before and after data was collected, I was able to return to the sub-questions I had posed in chapter 1 regarding the use and impact of multicultural literature. In this section, each question is listed and then followed with an answer. To avoid being redundant, some of the answers are quite brief as they have already been addressed to great extent in earlier chapters. Those that have not are explained in greater detail.

1) *Do my participants include visible and invisible minorities in their image of the Canadian citizen?*

The answer to this question is essentially addressed by the opposite question, what do my participants see as Canadian? As noted in chapter 5 and the first part of chapter 7, my participants held contradictory views on whether or not minorities could be Canadians. Although they vocalized a Canadian identity that suggested inclusion of visible and invisible minorities, their more subconscious responses denied such latitude. Indirect data collection exercises illustrated that the students saw the Canadian as White, Anglo-Saxon. Minorities could be Canadians but their relationship to the identity was articulated as brief, tentative and set in an immigrant history.

2) *Did exposure to multicultural children’s literature encourage my participants to include various members of our pluralistic society into the notion of Canadian or did it only serve to further objectify and exoticize minorities?*

This question can only be considered in reference to context. By this, I mean that my data has indicated that either result could occur from use of the genre. The deciding factor lies in how the literature is used. For the majority of the class, the literature was handled in a non-
critical manner. Racism was discussed but only to the point of comfort for the students. Minority members in the texts were seen as examples of their race and emphasis was placed on seeing our similarities in order that we may live in a peaceful society. While I do not have direct data suggesting that this approach caused my participants to objectify and exoticize minority groups, other have argued this position (Keohoe & Mansfield, 1993; Lee & Low, 1993; Dowd, 1992; Roney, 1986). What I did find is that this approach did not significantly encourage students to perceive minorities as valuable facets of the Canadian identity.

In contrast to the large-class experience, the four students whose exposure to the texts was supplemented with additional critical observations appeared to be less inclined to rely on minority characters as stereotypical entities. Instead, three of the four, excluding Chris, often considered the characters' feelings, even when the author failed to do so. For example, when a situation was presented in a comedic fashion, members of the critical reading group questioned whether or not the particular character saw the same humour. The group also often referred to characters from past stories and imagined their reaction to a situation in another text. This suggests that the characters became real for my participants rather than fixed identities existing within the pages of a particular story.

3) Can multicultural texts stand on their own or are they part of a more complex relationship of attitudes, perceptions, and decisions existing both in and out of schools?

The answer to this question may appear to be simplistic as an abundance of multicultural research asserts that all aspects of the curriculum must be considered in context to each student’s personal world (Cummins, 1996; Epp, 1996; Feuerverger, 1994; Banks, 1993). Yet, at the same time, it has been recognized that crucial consideration of the child’s background seldom occurs (Delpit, 1988; Ada, 1988; Au, 1980). Similarly, those interested in multicultural children’s literature are often critical of the manner in which the genre is used in the classroom. Arguments abound regarding the lack of critical thought employed in the delivery of the texts. The fear is that although students are exposed to the texts they do not interact with the stories in a meaningful and educative process (Banks, 1971; Beach, 1996; Dowd, 1992).

Data from my research suggests that such concerns are far from unfounded. Rather than standing on their own, the texts became integrated into the students’ pre-existing perceptions. This relationship explains why several of the students were reluctant to discuss texts more anti-racist in presentation. Arguments put forth by Berlak (1999) and Felman and Laub (1992), purport that critiquing and understanding diversity is problematic when the
cognitive framework appropriate for discussing racism is absent. This does not render a
dialogue on diversity impossible but does severely limit the scope and depth. Similarly, Simon
and Armitage-Simon (1995) argue that some books can actually be harmful to students if not
considered in relation to their personal experiences.

As Berlak (1999) and Felman and Laub (1992) note, the solution to this problem lies in
the development of a cognitive framework that provides students with a dialogue to both
understand and discuss issues of racism and privilege. In other words, teachers help students
facilitate a dialogue on racism that springs from their complex relationship of attitudes,
perceptions, and knowledge existing both in and out of schools. This process insists that
teachers have an understanding regarding the relationships students bring into the classroom.
To simply present a text in the classroom without an environment supportive of dialogue
promises little change in attitudes. This assertion can be supported by the lack of
transformation in the perspectives demonstrated by my participants who did not have the skills
to critically discuss their feelings about the texts.

4) Can multicultural children’s literature help develop critical literacy skills in children?

Before multicultural children’s literature can be utilized to help develop critical literacy
skills, the ways in which literature is commonly used in the classroom have to be reviewed.
Despite the growing acceptance of multicultural texts, there are problems in both the presence
and understanding of the genre.

First I am bothered by the ghettoization of multicultural children’s literature. By this I
mean, that the primary use of the texts appears to occur within the language arts, social studies,
and history curriculum (Banks, 1989; MacPhee, 1997). This has two fundamental
consequences: 1) multicultural education has been perceived as a segment of one particular
discipline rather than an as infusion throughout the entire curriculum and 2) non-language arts
educators have been able to avoid engaging in issues of diversity with the explanation that it is
not part of their discipline.

The solutions to this problem are delivery and education. During my time in Sara’s
class, I tried to be attentive to the need to vary the time and location of the stories. In some
cases, they were used in the language arts period; however, stories were also connected to
issues in social studies, art, science, and math. Sometimes the books were at the center of the
lesson; at other times, they provided background information. Sara also began to find new
opportunities for the literature. During some un-scheduled visits during the second year (Sara
allowed me to come and go as I pleased), I found Sara making innovative connections between diversity and topics such as environmental studies and self-discipline.

My second concern is the lack of carry through and conversation used in relation to multicultural texts. Yes, such stories are being used in the classroom but are they being critically discussed in context to our country's past, present, and future? After all what is the point of walking a mile in another person's shoes if you have little sense of where they have already been? In the previous chapters I have referred to various studies and researchers who argue that an uncritical review and delivery of multicultural texts can solidify stereotypical beliefs (Aboud, 1999; Kehoe & Mansfield, 1993). Their data supports the argument that simply placing multicultural literature in the classroom is not sufficient. Exposure to the texts is just the beginning of crossing a border; critical discussion must provide another layer to the stories. This adding of layers is a co-operative exercise based on dialogue creation and utilization between teacher and students. The instigation of this dialogue becomes the seeds for critical literacy.

Facilitating this dialogue is not an easy task. As I explained in chapter 6, many of my participants were reluctant to discuss texts that went beyond a surface treatment of multiculturalism. Instead they preferred stories that contained an obvious villain (as opposed to a nameless oppressive system) and a happy ending. Bringing them to the understanding that such conditions are not always in place was difficult. The maturation of my critical reading group demonstrated that the solution rested on the expansion of students' conceptual framework regarding racism and its systemic and insidious nature.

A New Question:

A question that was not part of my original inquiry but developed out of my data is: how does the use of multicultural literature impact the experienced teacher? Many of the models outlining the use of multicultural children's literature, including Banks' (1989), focuses on changes within the student. However, I also witnessed a transformation in Sara. Since I was not actually documenting this change, my contention is based mainly on observation. Given this, I think there is evidence that the books had an impact on Sara.

Like many teachers attempting to bring multiculturalism into their curriculum, Sara relied heavily on the food, fun, and festival approach mixed with a firm belief in colourblindness. Open to lessons on different cultural holidays or foods, Sara believed that students are all the same and should be treated as such:

MV: I noticed that several students even gave you Hanukkah gifts and cards.
S: Yes, and that makes me feel good. I mark their math tests and I think I didn't get that through to you. I marked their social studies test and I think I didn't get that through to you. But then I see this and I think, I did get that through to you, that despite our differences, we are one and the same. I will respect you and in return you have to respect me.

MV: Do you think your students respect diversity?

S: I hope so, I hope so. I don't know. I like to think that every child that goes through my classroom learns about respect. That he or she will learn to not even notice colour.

Despite Sara's attention to diversity issues, I had noticed that she avoided any real conversations regarding racism with her students. On the rare occasion when Sara did talk about racism, the class dialogue sounded more like a choral reading than a debate:

Sara: Ms. Varma has just read a story about people being judged by their skin colour. What do we call this?

Class: Racism.

Sara: Yes that's right. Is racism acceptable?

Class: No.

Sara: Are we better than someone else with a different skin colour?

Class: No.

Sara: What should we do if someone says something racist?

Class: Stop them...say something

Sara: Or....

A student: Tell a teacher!

Sara: That's right, exactly. (Field notes, February 10, 1998)

I had heard similar chants on other occasions leaving me to wonder if, left to their own devices, would the students really be able to explain the intricacies of racism or if they would revert to their memorized mantra.

The following year, the number of choral readings seemed to have been reduced. On occasions in which I managed to catch Sara discussing racism, I sensed a new approach based on open-ended questions:
Sara: Is it O.K. to hate someone because of his or her colour?
Class: No.
Sara: Why?
Class: It's wrong, it's not fair, it not nice (various similar answers)
Sara: Why? (after long silence). O.K. here's another question. Is it alright to make fun of a certain race if there isn't anyone from that race around? So, can I make a joke about Chinese people if there aren't any Chinese people around?
Brent (new grade 4 student): Well, if no one is around, like then you can't hurt anyone's feelings.
Barb: I don't know. I mean you're still letting people believe something wrong about Chinese people. I mean, well you [Sara] said that a lot of people make jokes about Jewish people and them being cheap but you give us things all the time and you're Jewish so if I told a joke about Jewish people being cheap, well it's not true even if you're not around. And people might think it's true because there isn't anyone around to show something different.
Sara: Exactly. There's a name for what Barb is talking about, when we hold false ideas about groups of people. What's that called?
Lisa: Stereotypes!
Sara: Right. But you know, stereotypes are sometimes based on truths. So are all stereotypes bad?
Class: Yes.
Sara: Why? And what if I said something good like all Chinese people are hard workers. This is a stereotype; is this bad? Why is this still wrong? (Field notes, March 15, 1999)
The students did not have an answer for Sara, leaving her to spend the rest of the lesson on the complexity of stereotyping. This and others lessons that I observed, was a far cry from the choral readings of the year before. They still existed but with less frequency.
Another noticeable change was the number of multicultural books in Sara's class. During my preliminary observations in the first year, Sara had a total of two books that could only remotely be considered multicultural. In the second year, Sara had replenished her library with several new multicultural texts and used them frequently. Considering Sara was three years away from retirement, this change was worth noting. Several of the books that she chose surprised me, as I am sure she would have found them too disturbing the previous year. To me this indicated a change in attitude regarding what her students could discuss.
Finally, Sara demonstrated achievement of Banks' (1989) fourth level, "decision-making and social action approach." Towards the end of year two of my study, Sara initiated a school project involving grade 4 and 5 classes at West End School. The project consisted of students participating in workshops on discrimination and diversity. After each lesson, students were asked to write a poem about something that had touched them. At the end of the project, students selected their favourite poem, copied them on to placards, and completed them with illustrations. The poems were then exhibited in various locations across the city. The event was so successful that Sara decided to make the project an annual event. This year, her students were paired with a kindergarten that served economically underprivileged children. Through their interactions with the children, West End students were made aware of how one type of discrimination can sanction others. Although Sara always claimed to be proactive against racism, this was the greatest evidence that I had seen so far.

Some may argue that Sara's changes are minimal and, since she still shied away from discussions regarding overt racism, not overly productive. I must admit that these were my initial feelings. There were several times that I was critical of Sara's food and festival approach to diversity. I expected her to be a crusader against racism and when she did not act according to my expectations, I thought she had failed in this role. Nothing could be further than the truth.

Working through my thoughts, I realized that my contention with Sara's approach was based on preconceived notions. I saw only one side of the situation. This perception relied upon my expectations of Sara as a minority teacher. I expected her to be unique in her delivery of multicultural education since she, unlike mainstream teachers, had experienced racism. What I did not see is the context in which Sara had to teach. I failed to address the issues of what many anti-racist educators refer to as essentialism and intersection (Dei, 1994; Tronya, 1993; Lee, 1985). Essentialism refers to a totalising discourse and discursive practice where you assume a homogenous identity for the individual or group without noting the differences as well as contestations (Dei, 2000). Intersection, on the other hand, acknowledges how one identity influences another (Dei, 1994 & 2000). In his discussion of essentiality and intersection, Dei, (1995 & 2000) explains that both concepts can occur along class, gender, and/or race lines. To his list, I wish to add place and time.

Much of our identity is tied to place and time. One only has to think of such sayings as the consuming 80s or small-town beliefs, to understand how place and time help define us. When I talk about multiculturalism I often become annoyed at people who do not see it as a
subject relevant to areas such as the Maritimes. I have always contended that multiculturalism lives a different reality in predominately-White places and needs to be approached as such. Ironically, my biggest problem with Sara was based on my own inability to take my own advice. Although I had filled myself with readings regarding institutionalized racism, I failed to appreciate the systems within which Sara worked. Her teaching experience and reality was linked to a school district and education department that at one time penalized her for being different by not acknowledging her religious holidays. Conditions have changed but not to the extent that teachers are encouraged to discuss racism in an open and sophisticated manner.

I also had to recognize the time. Despite the current resistance to multicultural and anti-racist education, the present atmosphere towards such discussion is more accessible than it was when Sara began teaching. The majority of her teaching experience exists within a time period during which difference was neither appreciated nor welcomed. It was she who made this clear to me:

S: I prefer to discuss issues such as discrimination on a general level... You have to remember, I started teaching at a very different time. As a teacher, you can stand in your future classroom and talk about racism. I couldn’t do that! If I had opened my mouth, I could have been in a lot of trouble. I have to be very careful because parents may feel that I have my own agenda, you know, “there goes the Jews again, pushing their own ideas.” Or they feel that I’m infringing on their right to expression or that I’m doing their job. This is where I come from.

Obviously, I had forgotten to try on Sara’s sneakers.

After two years in Sara’s class, I am compelled to express my admiration of her as an individual and teacher. I do not say this flippantly. Sara has experienced racism in ways I never have. At the same time, rather than dwell on these experiences, she has used them to become a caring and strong teacher who indeed is a crusader for justice and equality. I had trouble putting Sara’s style in words that would do her justice. However, after one particular meeting with my thesis committee, Dr. David Booth noted that she teaches “through revelation, not confrontation” (personal notes, March 21, 2000). This is a perfect portrayal of Sara. In truth, she had a clear understanding of her students and their experiences with diversity. I may have read and written about the challenges of engaging White children in a dialogue on diversity but she lived it. She knew what issues they could comfortably discuss and which they could not. This does not mean that she did not try to challenge them (as I had first believed) but rather, she mapped out the journey using different roads.
CHAPTER VIII --REFLECTIONS

Often a piece of writing is closed with a conclusion, a summary of final thoughts. I found this a difficult thing to do with this thesis. I can provide a synopsis of my actual research data but the implications seem to remain with me on a continual basis. On a number of occasions, I found myself witnessing something that brought back thoughts regarding my work at West End. Therefore I am reticent about calling this chapter the conclusion. I prefer the word reflections because it suggests a pause, rather than a termination, in my journey.

What Does this all Mean?:

After nearly four years of research and writing on one particular topic, I have to stand back and think, what does this all mean? Some of the findings are easy to decipher. The fact that children growing up in predominately-White places perceive all Canadians to be reflections of themselves is one such finding. The immediate implication of this is obvious — my participants think all Canadians are White, English, and Christian.

The second question regarding the impact of multicultural children’s literature is more complex. In reference to my data, I would argue that using multicultural texts in the classroom is not sufficient. Uncritical use of the resource may further solidify stereotypes. In contrast, direct and honest discussion on racism, as in that engaged in by the critical reading group, achieved a level of caring and sophisticated thinking not seen in group conversations that focussed only on the niceties of diversity. Although research contends differently, there is a popular belief that children are fragile and cannot handle issues of racism (see Banks, 1998; Neito, 1994; Paley, 1979; Kozol, 1967). In the case of my participants, the readiness to discuss racism was predicated on what tools they had acquired to approach the dialogue.

Most of my participants were not able to talk about racism. As outlined in chapter 6, they demonstrated different denial and avoidance techniques. My critical reading group, in contrast, demonstrated the acquired ability to engage in such discussions. Most of the students in the class began at the same level of thought in regards to racism. The crucial factor that created a difference in capacity of response between the class and the critical reading group was critical thinking dialogue.

The Value of Critical Thinking:

Before people can engage in a discussion, they need to have a framework or vocabulary suitable to the given topic (Berlak, 1999; Felman & Laub, 1992). In the critical reading group, the participants were given this vocabulary through the process of developing their own critical
thinking skills. Educators’ discontent with the current educational system decries a need for a student population capable of thinking critically. Giroux (1996) makes such an appeal when he notes:

If educators are to take the relationship between schooling and democracy seriously, this means organizing school life around a version of citizenship that educates students to make choices, think critically, and believe they can make a difference. ...students need more than work skills and information about society; they also need to be able to critically engage their strengths and weakness. (p. 298)

Part of this ability to engage critically in the world and believe that change is possible is to have the confidence to approach problems such as racism. My critical reading group developed the confidence and interest to talk about racism in ways not evident in the classroom. The literature, as well as the skills to appreciate it, allowed them to feel closer to those they had yet to meet.

One of the most valuable conversations that emerged from my relationship with the participants is indeed the concept of race. Class discussions early in the research demonstrated that my students saw race as something non-White -- something not to do with them. This was reinforced by Sara’s propensity to use Ying as her example when talking about racism. As visible diversity was so removed from their everyday experiences, it was difficult for the students to understand how racism impacted their own lives. Because of the lack of critical conversation in the whole class settings, most of the participants continued to think of race as a label associated with non-Whites. However, the four students in the critical reading group gained the opportunity to see race as a means of acquiring power and privilege (Dei, 1996; McIntosh, 1990). They participated in thoughtful discussions that explored how racism can actually some benefit some people and social institutions. Particular books, such as A Time for Toys (Wild, 1991) allowed them to vicariously witness how race -- or the racialization of a group -- can be used to manipulate whole societies into the ultimate horror of genocide. The critical readings demonstrated to the students the importance for society to do more than just vilify racism with verbal condemnation but also attack it with proactive behaviour that reveals the complex nature of racism. Given the time that the four students had to deal with this new cognitive understanding of race and racism, they did demonstrate an evolution of thought that reveals the complex and deeply ingrained thought processes, which they developed through the vehicle of multicultural children literature.
Teaching children, and adults for that matter, to be critical of their society is not about teaching them to be cynical and discover all of society's mistakes. Being critical is about being perceptive. It is about caring and ensuring that those around us are treated in a humane and just fashion. Critical thinking in citizenship and identity is about having the skills to create a community with a sense of freedom to change elements destructive to peoples' lives. Freedom to develop "a new kind of hope, a new shaping of possibility, a new venture into the predictable" (Greene, 1996, p. 313). This is why it was not enough to simply tell children to include diversity in their notion of the Canadian identity. They need to feel this need, to want to create a society that operates on the assumption that all is included.

Within this research, critical literacy proved to be a way to create a caring and thinking society. Participants of my critical reading group asked questions that they never voiced in the classroom, they challenged ideas presented to them in the stories, and made conclusions based on their own feelings. In other words, in the limited time I spent with them, they began to think critically. As Darling-Hammond (d.n.k.) notes, the survival of a fair and equitable society necessitates the need for critical thinking:

In order to ensure a popular intelligence and an intelligent populace capable of democratic decision-making, schools must cultivate in all students the skills, knowledge, and understanding that both lead them to want to embrace the values undergirding our pluralistic democracy and arm them with a keen intelligence capable of free thought. Schools must provide an education that enables critical thinking and communal experience, so that citizens can intelligently debate competing ideas, weigh the individual and the common good, and make judgements that sustain democratic institutions and ideals. (p. 80)

Open to Stories:

Instrumental to critical literacy is the openness to various interpretations to knowledge and the understanding of others. In reference to my study, the various interpretations were provided through the multicultural texts. As Maxine Greene (1996) notes, artistic endeavors have proven themselves as communicable acts of caring and community, the touchstone of citizenship:

The shaping of narratives, the telling of stories help persons to identify their moral purposes, to orient themselves to some vision of what they believe to be decent and good and right. So does the gathering together in classrooms and corridors to play together, to sing together, to make decisions together that affect all involved. There must be moments for recognition, moments for face-to-face encounters among the diverse newcomers in our schools. It is when spaces open among them, when their diverse perspectives are granted integrity that
something they can hold in common may begin to emerge. It requires imagination; it requires involvement with the arts and the personal presentness the arts invite. (p. 312)

Stories are a medium for relationships. There must be a teller and a listener. The teller and listener may even be the same person; sometimes our greatest lessons are the ones we quietly discover through our own thoughts. For a relationship to foster, the stories must be told honestly and without fear of ridicule; otherwise the stories are empty. By being critical of the world around us, we learn to identify the empty stories and challenge them with narratives of hope and justice. My participants who were encouraged to engage in the texts critically began to think about different versions of the Canadian identity rather than just the one they originally knew. The books were more than fiction to them; they were the "new shaping of possibility" (Greene, 1996, p. 313). Of course multicultural literature alone cannot prepare students for a diverse world; multicultural education is too complex for one avenue to be the road to understanding. Rather literature is one of many ways multicultural education can be utilized to teach citizens the value of a diverse world that recognizes the integrity of its various members. Multicultural literature is not the entire plot. It is simply one way to tell the story.

The Actual Plot:

The actual plot of this story is about change; it is about the ability to react to and promote change in a manner advantageous to all in society. Societies have witnessed different responses to change. In some cases, direct action has been taken to squelch change and destroy any agents that may instigate it. Restrictive and discriminatory immigration policies as well as genocide have resulted from such a response. At other times, eyes have closed in the denial of change. Consequently, we are unprepared for what will naturally come about. Our current story of the world’s ruinous impact on the environment has grown from the seeds of denial. And at other times, we have become so fixated on the result of change, that we have forgotten to understand the process. In the case of my study, the process of how to create an inclusive Canadian identity is essential before we can advertise our mosaic quality to the world.

Multicultural education is about understanding the process of change. It is not about foods, festivals and fun. It is not about creating the perfect curriculum for everyone. It is not about arriving at a magical destination. It is about a complete movement:

Multicultural education is a philosophical concept and an educational process. It is a concept built upon the philosophical ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity. It recognizes, however, that equality and equity are not the same thing: equal access does not necessarily guarantee
fairness. Multicultural education is a process that takes place in schools and other educational institutions and informs all subject areas and other aspects of the curriculum. It prepares all students to work actively toward structural equality in organizations and institutions. ...it helps students develop positive self-concepts and discover who they are, particularly in terms of their multiple group memberships. ...it confronts social issues involving race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, gender, homophobia, and disability. It accomplishes this by providing instruction in familiar contexts and building on students’ diverse ways of thinking. It encourages student investigations of world and national events and how these events affect their lives. It teaches critical thinking skills, as well as democratic decision making, social action, and empowerment skills. Finally multicultural education is a total process: it cannot be truncated: all components of its definition must be in place in order for multicultural education to be genuine and viable. (Grant, 1993; p. 4-5)

The True Canadian:

A central question in this thesis has revolved around identity. In the search to discover who and what is Canadian, larger questions regarding what criteria should be used have surfaced instead. This emergence is reminiscent of an exchange that takes place in the story, Peter and the Wolf (Chardiet, 1982). In the scene, the bird asks the duck, “What kind of bird can’t fly?” and the duck responds, “What kind of bird can’t swim?” The question each poses is couched in particular assumptions, assumptions that each one of us carries into society. The important aspect is to create questions that allow for new possibilities rather than impose restrictions on what can and cannot be.

As the students’ voices were the most important aspect of this thesis, it makes sense for me to end with their words of hope. The following is from a card that Barb gave me on my last visit to the classroom. I think her brief sentences say more than I have said in the last couple of hundred pages:

Dear Ms. Varma, Thank you for teaching me about books and about other people. When I grow up I want to help the world be a better place. (June 15, 1999)
APPENDIX A – MEDIA REVIEW

In discussions regarding the public’s perceptions of diversity and minority issues, attention is often noted to the role played by the media in the presentation of related information (Henry et al, 2000; McLaren, 1996). The inclusion of a media review of racially-based stories in the Maritimes serves two purposes. First, the review provides the reader with background knowledge of the various racial issues currently in the public eye. Familiarity with these stories, as well as the accompanying letters to the editor, helps one to understand the racial environment in which my participants live and learn. Secondly, most of the stories I include are not minor incidents but rather refer to events well known to the general public. Therefore it is conceivable to think that my participants would have been aware of some of these stories. Perhaps, some even heard the parents’ opinions of these events9.

RACIAL ISSUES:

PUBLIC\nATION: The Moncton Times and Transcript
DATE:  99.12.18
PAGE: D3

Respect Other Cultures, but Don’t Ignore Ours

Dear Editor,
Recently I heard a comment from two different sources which disturbed me greatly as a
Canadian. When I inquired as to why Christmas carols were not allowed at a certain workplace
or featured in a school concert, the response both times was “we would not want to offend
people.” Is this a new policy for Canadians – that we are so willing to accept and be tolerant of
others that we are prepared to deny and even lose our own cultural heritage?

For us, this trend began with the removal of prayer and Bible readings from the schools,
lest we offend people; now it continues to become even more widespread. We should not be
afraid to continue with our own customs and traditions, based on our Christian heritage. Let’s
stop this trend now, before our own unique heritage is lost forever to the youth of this great
nation.

PUBLIC\nATION: The Chronicle-Herald (Halifax, NS)
DATE:  2000.03.16
PAGE: D2

The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same

9 These stories were collected through Mediascope, a Federal government news gathering website. Although the
website reviews all major Canadian papers, I limited myself to those easily accessible to my participants and their
families.
It seems as if I am often in discussions where people want me to agree that the situation for African North Americans is getting better. African Heritage Month is always a catalyst for conversations of equality, fair treatment and "look how far you have come" talks. Always during these conversations, I am quick to disagree. I, of course, feel that much of the so-called advancements are merely cosmetic and Band-Aid type solutions. Some institutions have policies and procedures to deal with many types of diversity. Often, the perception is that these strategies are almost exclusively developed for women – white women. Perhaps the difference is that the enthusiasm to tackle women's issues far outweighs the enthusiasm to eradicate racism. Another problem arises when there isn't enough monitoring of inappropriate behaviour. Policing and correction cannot all be left exclusively to government-run human rights organizations. We are constantly reminded that the economy is apparently getting better for some. It is usually thought that in times of great economic despair, racist behaviour seems to rise. However, the economy seems to have nothing to do with the rise in flagrant racism. Unfortunately one need only read or listen to the news, where weekly there are stories about discrimination because of colour. It is either more frequent reporting of these incidents, or racism is on the rise. I believe the latter. We cannot ignore the fact that this is a continent-wide issue.

Getting better, you say? African Nova Scotian residents of Hammonds Plains have to take the municipality and their municipal councillor to court because of the way they have been mistreated in obtaining as basic a necessity as water. An African Nova Scotian teacher was arrested, handcuffed and taken to the police station for no good reason. The police claimed he was driving erratically. The same week, a white driver in Ontario gets only a suspended licence after he tried to run a police car off the road. Blatant racism is the allegation of two African Canadians who recently lost their jobs. Once the claim is made, there is the painful and stressful process of proving to a Human Rights Commission that, in fact, discrimination exists. The stress and anxiety this causes are immeasurable. One does not always have the time or energy to pursue every incident of discriminatory behaviour. This, of course, means that many individuals and organizations get away with inappropriate actions.

As appalling as some of these incidents may be, there is nothing that can indicate to the casual, non-black reader the devastating effect that such actions can have when they are directed at you. Those individuals who never have to experience it cannot possibly understand that being confronted by racism is as hurtful physically and mentally as a physical assault.
Whenever one gets assaulted, the natural reaction is self-defence. I am not a violent person in my actions or words, but I recently encountered yet another unapologetic attack solely because of my race. On Saturday, while shopping with a white friend, I approached a counter to make a purchase, while my friend stood well back and obviously did not require assistance. The clerk chose to ignore me entirely and address my friend, who was five paces back from the counter. She was determined to wait on her. I got the definite impression that even speaking to me was somehow distasteful to her. If this had been the first such incident, I may have been inclined to disregard it and believe that because of my colour, I somehow completely blended into the background of a large department store. Too many African Nova Scotians confirm that when they walk into stores in the Halifax region, they are often doggedly watched and followed, but totally ignored when they need service. Do these merchants realize that our money is the same colour as that of white customers? In these incidents, the common denominator is colour - a factor that none of us can, or wants to, change. What needs to change is the systemic, internalized racist reaction to difference.

PUBLICATION: The Fredericton Daily Gleaner
DATE: 99.10.04
PAGE: C1

To Proclaim or Not To Proclaim

To proclaim or not to proclaim is indeed the question at City Hall. If there's one thing you learn watching daytime talk shows it's that "heritage" is a code word. You know, like Heritage Front -- that organization preoccupied with illegal immigrants and refugees and the diseases they may be carrying into white bread America. Fredericton city council issued a proclamation last Monday for European Heritage Week -- an occasion dreamt up by Don Andrews, a Toronto man convicted in 1985 for violating hate propaganda laws. "Some people call me a Nazi, others a white supremacist," I heard Andrews say in describing himself on CBC Radio. Councillors were told that European Heritage Week celebrates the history of Europeans in Canada. But Andrews and his ilk believe immigrants are a threat to Canadian society, and the declaration of a special week will restore pride among white people. "This country was built on European culture and heritage and it's important to keep it that way," Andrews has asserted.

Fredericton Mayor Walter Brown says he never meant to offend anyone -- it was a simple mistake. But he said he'd await an "official complaint" before rescinding the proclamation. Tom Kuttner of the Atlantic Jewish Federation and the Fredericton Multicultural Association did complain and they should be applauded for doing so. Otherwise, it appears our
elected officials weren't willing to fix what can only be described as a heinous mistake. "It has already been read. It is just a proclamation. The proclamation by itself does absolutely no harm," Brown said, apparently not realizing that racists across Canada could use this city's proclamation to seek legitimacy elsewhere. It should be noted Halifax and Victoria, similarly duped by Andrews, took immediate steps to erase their mistake. When that point was finally driven home here, our good mayor had a change of heart. "We'll do it as soon as possible," Brown said later in the week, after being sufficiently satisfied the proclamation was in poor taste.

PUBLICATION: The Moncton Times and Transcript
DATE: 2000.03.10
PAGE: A3

No Complaints About Hate Literature

Codiac Regional RCMP confirmed reports of at least one individual distributing pamphlets that could be described as hate literature targeting a specific minority. The literature is believed to come from a Toronto-based radical group called Aryan Radical Unity and was being handed out to passers-by in Moncton's downtown area this week. A police spokesman said he had not seen the literature, but had heard the same report. However, no one has filed any official complaints. Without a complaint that the material is offensive to a group or minority, police can't act, he explained. Police are still monitoring the situation, he added.

PUBLICATION: The Telegraph Journal (NB Province-wide paper)
DATE: 99.10.04
PAGE: C1

Saint John Settles Police Racism Case

The city of Saint John has reached an out-of-court financial settlement with a former officer who charged the city's police force with racism. Keith Langford spent 17 years on the Saint John force and claimed he faced years of racial slurs from fellow officers. The city agreed to pay Langford $120,000 over the next six years. He will then get an annual pension of $10,000. The city will also issue Langford a written apology. Saint John Mayor Shirley McAlary said officers will be taking sensitivity courses in the next few months -- but added she doesn't think racism is a problem on the force. McAlary explained why the city agreed to a deal to put an end to the matter.

"We would have exposed a lot of people and a lot of things would have been said and aired in public and it's probably best they're not," said the mayor. "Financially, this is what the
city felt was the best in the interests of all involved." Added McAlary: "The police environment is a little different environment than some other business corporations and they sort of see the bad side of life a lot more than some of us do. And I think that this whole issue was an outstanding issue long enough and we're very pleased that it's resolved now."

Feels Anti-racist Action Chapter Is Not Needed

Dear Editor:
Monica Timalsena's letter in The Daily Gleaner of Aug. 3 shows what side of the fence she is on. Why do we have a Fredericton Chapter Anti-Racist Action? Who is paying for this? Who formed it? What for? Where is Monica when the English are discriminated against in northern N.B.? Not a peep from her. Where is she when the English and French together are put in the same position when Quebecers come in and take our jobs in N.B.? Not a peep. Where is she when the Anglo Society of N.B. does not get one red cent from the N.B. and federal governments but every year these governments are giving the Acadian Society $2.5 million? Not a peep. What is on her mind when she writes a hateful letter as mentioned above? A hate letter from an anti-racist? We need an Acadian Society, an Anglo Society and a Fredericton Anti-Racist Action group about as much as we need more cancer and taxes in N.B. What we do need is for both governments to stop sticking their noses where they do not belong. We already have an instruction book. We should try to live by it instead of trying to fester hate and trouble, which is where we are heading. That instruction book is the Holy Bible.

Mayor Puts Foot Squarely In Mouth

Along with a piece of Halifax's 250th birthday cake, Mayor Walter Fitzgerald put his foot in his mouth on Monday. Fitzgerald said atrocities by the city's founding fathers against the Micmac were probably no worse than what the Micmac did themselves.

"The Mi'kmaw tribes killed white people too," he said. "They probably killed more than we did. Who wants to get into that? This is a celebration."

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10 Mr. Langford passed away suddenly in February 2000. At the time of writing this thesis, the cause had yet to be publicly announced. He was 32 years old.
Fitzgerald made the comments after an actor representing Edward Cornwallis, Halifax's founder, appeared for the official kickoff of the city's birthday celebrations. Cornwallis is reviled by Natives for placing a bounty on the heads of Micmac people, including women, children and the elderly, when he arrived with English settlers.

Earlier this year, Fitzgerald apologized to the Micmac for Cornwallis's actions and promised the historical figure wouldn't be part of a re-enactment of the settlers' landing planned for Saturday.

PUBLICATION: The Chronical-Herald (Halifax, NS)
DATE: 99.06.24
PAGE: C8

Appalling Remark

Dear Editor:
I am disgusted and appalled that Walter Fitzgerald would say such an inappropriate remark at Halifax's 250th birthday party ("The Mi'kmaw tribes killed a lot of white people, probably more than we did..."). To also call it "history... old stuff" shows what this politician is made of!

An actor portraying Edward Cornwallis should not have been present at the celebration, out of respect for the Mi'kmaw. Many atrocities have been committed against mankind and it is our responsibility to remember them - to acknowledge them out of respect to those who died and their descendants. Fitzgerald may be "the mayor of the white people," but this is one "white person" who doesn't want him! I also will not bring my children to this weekend's events - my own silent protest. Instead, we will have a discussion on Halifax's history - including Cornwallis' horrendous actions. He may have been a "product of his time," but I will not glorify him at the expense of our Mi'kmaw.

PUBLICATION: The Chronical-Herald (Halifax, NS)
DATE: 99.06.24
PAGE: C8

Past Is past

Dear Editor:
What's wrong? Did Mayor Walter Fitzgerald say something about the Mi'kmaw that was "factually" incorrect or something that was, perhaps, "politically" incorrect? His statement, "The Mi'kmaw tribes killed a lot of white people, probably more than we did," by most accounts is accurate. We cannot change the face of history to suit minorities or special interest groups. You owe it to your readers not to portray objections by any group as fact without first
researching it. Whether we like it or not, those times were brutal. War was up close and personal, with blood and gore; not like today's smart bombs, where we cannot see the human carnage. The Mi'kmaw were in league with the French, who sent raiding parties against the English settlers. It wasn't about invaders of their land. The French had been here for hundreds of years by the time Cornwallis arrived in 1749. My great-great-great-great-grandfather arrived in 1752 from Montbeliard (now part of France) with his wife and children, as part of a group of Foreign Protestants recruited by the British to bring settlers to Halifax. He was one of the founding settlers of Lunenburg. He was scalped by Mi'kmaw and died in his dooryard. Let's not get into mud slinging. Past is past. It is neither right nor wrong. It is simply history!

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle-Herald (Halifax, NS)
DATE: 99.06.24
PAGE: C8

Apology Not Needed

Dear Editor:
It seems that the tail is attempting to wag the dog in this fair country we call Canada. The powers that be in Quebec are in a continuing process of trying to change the facts of history, and now the Native leaders here in Nova Scotia are endeavouring to do the same thing. Edward Cornwallis is the founder of Halifax and that cannot be changed, no matter how much some would want. What he did in the course of history may be regrettable, but that also cannot be changed. I think our mayor needs to apologize to no one - at least, that is, in regard to his remarks on Monday past.

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle-Herald (Halifax, NS)
DATE: 99.06.24
PAGE: C9

Way to Go, Mayor

Dear Editor:
I would like to commend Mayor Walter Fitzgerald for including Edward Cornwallis in Halifax's 250th anniversary. Edward Cornwallis was a great man who founded a great city. It wouldn't make sense to exclude the man who founded Halifax from its 250th anniversary. Even if Edward Cornwallis did put a bounty on the heads of Mi'kmaws, that has nothing to do with this celebration. This is a celebration of the founding of Halifax, not a celebration of bounties put on Mi'kmaw heads. The only real slap in the face here is the attempted exclusion of Edward Cornwallis from Halifax's 250th anniversary celebrations.
Way to go, Mayor Fitzgerald.

EDUCATION:

PUBLICATION: The Times and Transcript (Moncton, NB)
DATE: 99.09.20
PAGE: A6

Education Board Official Believes Holocaust Greatly Exaggerated

Despite testimony in 1998, William Ross says he will represent the best interests of all parents in performing his duty. The parents' representative on a committee that helps decide what is taught in New Brunswick's classrooms testified in a lawsuit last year that he believes the Holocaust is greatly exaggerated. William Ross, a retired school principal from the Salisbury area outside Moncton, represents District 4 on the provincial English board of education, the top level of the three-tiered parental governance structure for the school system. In August, the provincial board appointed him as its representative on the 14-member provincial curriculum advisory committee that may soon review changes to the social studies curriculum in the elementary and middle school grades.

In 1998, Ross testified in a Court of Queen's Bench defamation trial launched by his brother, former Moncton school teacher Malcolm Ross, who was banished from the classroom in 1991 because of off-duty comments and writings about Jews and the Holocaust. Speaking in defence of his brother, Ross, stated that he agreed that the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated.

Contacted last week, William Ross would not state to what degree he believes the Holocaust to be exaggerated. He said that he can fairly represent Jewish parents in his role as the representative of all parents on the curriculum committee.

The committee meets three times a year to review recommendations from committees of teachers and department officials proposing changes to what is taught in the province's classrooms. Proposed changes must come before the committee a minimum of three times. Once the advisory committee approves of a curriculum change, it is then taken to the provincial board of education for approval, and then to the Minister of Education for final approval.

THE FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT:

As I noted in my discussion on the Acadian population, the summer of 1999 was moment of pride. The city of Moncton hosted The Francophone Summit, an international...
meeting of French-speaking countries. For a year leading up to the international event, local newspapers were filled with stories of new projects, special events and government funding all in regards to the Summit. For a minority group living in the Maritimes, this was a sign of success. The closer the event date, the louder the voices of celebration became.

Unfortunately, another voice could also be heard. The same voice that years earlier had denied equal opportunity and access to the French population now decried the summit as proof of French privilege and English persecution. Of course, not all of the English population felt this way. In fact the voice of discontent belonged to a relatively small group. However, their anti-French feelings were apparent in numerous Letters to the Editor that filled the newspaper pages months before the summit was to commence. On the next few pages are some of the viewpoints on either side of the issue.

PUBLICATION: The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton, NB)  DATE: 99.06.04  PAGE: A7

Francophonie Summit Big Winner: The Francophonie Summit This September Will Be A Feather In Moncton's Cap, And An Accomplishment For All Canadians.

It is easy to be a naysayer and to nitpick when it comes to large-scale projects and endeavours, particularly when they involve public money. When the project is something such as the Francophonie Summit being held in Moncton this September, the fact that it is a perfect lightning rod for those constantly on the search for ways to take a stab at governing politicians makes naysaying and nitpicking even easier. Yet the summit is going to be a feather in Metro Moncton's cap, a feather in New Brunswick's cap, and yes, even a feather in Canada's cap. The Francophonie Summit ranks among the top four or five most important regular gatherings of world leaders. It is going to put the city and province on the map internationally. That alone has incalculable long-term value.

More immediately, estimates are that the gathering is also going to pump $40- to $50 million directly into Metro Moncton's economy thanks to the demand for services as well as the shopping done by our visitors. Longer term spinoff benefits are difficult to estimate but some go as high as another $150 million. Whatever the exact numbers, they are enormous and they will benefit everybody in the metro area and well beyond (tie-in events are being held in other centres as well).

Thus to complain about the fact the conference may cost as much as $23 million rather than $14 million, largely because security costs are soaring (these are paid for by the federal
government), is to nitpick. For one thing, a substantial chunk of that money is going to be spent in the region (on hotel rooms, gas, cell phones and whatever else the security details require). In other words, the cost may be borne by Canadian taxpayers, but most of the benefits are going to accrue to New Brunswick. Would anybody in the city complain if the feds awoke one day and decided they would give Metro Moncton a $15 million economic development grant? In effect, that is what the security cost will be. Meanwhile, it is all rather academic. The city, province and country have long been committed to hosting the summit. There's no turning back now. And even at one's most pessimistic, the $23 million cost is far outweighed by the $40 million or more that will be gained. There is, in short, nothing to naysay!

PUBLICATION: The Moncton Times and Transcript
DATE: 99.06.03
PAGE: C5

Feed The Children First, Then Talk Language

Dear Editor,
I have lived in Moncton a long time. Some would say too long but I love this city and I would love to stay here. My children feel the same. However, they may have to leave to get a job somewhere else. Why not here in Moncton, an economic boom-town. The answer is French. My children do not speak French and anyone not wearing the equality blinders knows that if you don't speak French, you don't work. Period. The summit is proof of this. How can we spend millions of dollars for a bunch of other French-speaking countries when we don't have enough to feed our children? Of course a lot of these children are English because their parents can't get jobs. There's the rub. Who cares if we make millions off of this. Who is going to get these millions? I don't need to answer that. These special gifts to the French are going to push all of the English out of Moncton. Is this our version of The Final Solution?

PUBLICATION: The Moncton Times and Transcript
DATE: 99.06.29
PAGE: D8

Enough is Enough

Dear Editor,
When this French Summit was announced we were told it would cost 15 million of our tax dollars. That was bad enough. Now it seems that the budget is a tad bit overboard and the cost is 40 million. This is crazy, not to mention bad accounting. Of course, as soon as I say this, I am considered a racist. How come the English can be criticized and that's o.k. but say
something (however intelligent) against the French and boom! You're a racist. I am not a racist but I am a taxpayer and I am tired of all of the unquestioned funds that are given to French issues. There are other groups living here.

PUBLICATION: The Moncton Times and Transcript
DATE: 99.08.23
PAGE: A2
BYLINE: Guy, Murray

Summit Coverage Won't Be A Platform For Hate

On Labour Day weekend, Metro Moncton will play host to an international gathering of leaders from the world's French-speaking countries. The eighth Sommet de la Francophonie involves heads of state and government officials from 52 countries who will meet in Moncton to talk politics, economics and co-operation. The theme for this summit is youth.

Even before the first heads of state have arrived, the summit has already placed Metro Moncton in the world spotlight, several cultural events have been held, as have numerous conferences focusing on a variety of topics, and all these have attracted visitors to New Brunswick. This event gives Metro Moncton the opportunity to display its hospitality, show off its cultural diversity and demonstrate what may be our region's strongest suit - our collective 'can-do' attitude.

The Times & Transcript's coverage of the summit and its related events is being approached from a very basic point of view - how does all this hoopla relate to, and impact on, our readers. The topics of the various meetings involving the 1,200 to 1,500 delegates attending this summit will generate some interest, but these sessions will not be the focus of our coverage. Instead, the news stories and features our staff writers will pursue will be on how we as a community relate to this world gathering - whether it be a story recounting a waitress's experiences in serving the president of a foreign country in one of our restaurants, or a behind-the-scenes look at how the RCMP provides security. It will be this interesting interaction as a community with this influx of humanity from around the world that will generate the story ideas we pursue.

But there is one news angle leading into this summit we won't be pursuing. As the summit draws closer, the number of faxes and calls coming into the news desk have increased from people attempting to hide their bigotry behind calls to save what they perceive as Canada's endangered English culture. The tone of a majority of these messages, mostly all anonymous, is the same - why is New Brunswick's largest-circulated English daily newspaper
being so anti-English, and so pro-French, by covering the various pre-summit events which have been staged thus far. Our coverage plans have nothing to do with language. If this was a world summit of Spanish-speaking countries, or an international gathering of the clans, our approach to news coverage would be the same.

The Times & Transcript is not going to be drawn into any fear-mongering campaigns involving groups or individuals who are 'planning' to do something to disrupt this conference for whatever political or personal motivations they may have. When a group which has nothing but hate as a motive begins making noise about what it might or might not do, it only serves to justify their cause to publish news stories carrying their message. It may very well be that some form of disruptive protest will be staged by some special interest group at the eighth Sommet de la Francophonie in Moncton that will catch the public's attention. And if there is a protest during the summit, the Times & Transcript will be there for the story. But in the meantime, we won't be writing any 'what if' stories about what some group or individual might be 'planning' to do in an effort to spread a message. That's not news gathering; that's providing a platform to those who want to use the media to perpetuate a narrow-minded cause.

FRENCH-ENGLISH RELATIONS:

Tired Of Reading Anti-Bilingualism Letters

Dear Editor:
This is an open letter to all members of the Anglo Society of N.B. and other such French haters. This is in response to the letter "Churches challenged by language issues" and other similar letters that have been plaguing the Letters to the Editor page for as long as I can remember. Ladies and gentlemen, lay off. I, for one, am sick of reading your ridiculous, pointless and hypocritical letters in this paper, and I wish it would cease. You are a group of rabid, right-wing French haters and no matter how much sugar you put on your words, you cannot deny the fact or attempt to change it. The point is that bilingualism does work extremely well in this province, probably better than in the country as a whole, except for the idiotic blabberings of the Anglo Society of New Brunswick. So shut up and stop whining, ladies and gentlemen, because the French community of New Brunswick is here to stay, and hallelujah to that. So please, stop inflicting upon us the torture of your mindless, badly written letters.

PUBLICATION: The Fredericton Daily Gleaner
Acadians Not The Only Ones Expelled

Dear Editor:
On Aug. 28 Bishop George Lernmnon had an article published in The Daily Gleaner that was very sympathetic toward the Acadians. Like most who sympathize with that group, he did not fail to mention their expulsion by the British more than 200 years ago. We English, who live in the Maritimes today, cannot be held responsible for that act. He did, however, fail to mention that the French, who were expelled from France, were the Huguenots (French Protestants). They were chased out like rats. There was no transportation provided for them like the British provided for the Acadians, according to The History of Canada before Confederation. The British took great care to keep family groups together, as much as possible.

The Empire Loyalists who, like the Acadians, did not wish to conform to the ruling powers of the day, were also run out of the U.S. and had to provide their own transportation. I find it utterly disgusting that the present day discrimination of the English speaking people of Quebec is never mentioned publicly by our English speaking politicians and high profile people such as the Bishop. Possibly the Bishop or some English-speaking politicians would like to comment on that.

Questions Mayor's Bilingual Intentions

Dear Editor:
There seems to be a lot of concern with regard to the mayor's speech during his swearing-in ceremony. The part the public is concerned with is the part where he indicates more bilingualism is required. Maybe the public should know what is being referred to. Does our mayor mean we have to increase services with more staff? Does he mean preference will be given to bilingual people (surely not) when any new staff is hired? Our provincial government has made a mess of things by starting this foolishness. Look at all the money wasted in Moncton over the summit. But then again, suggestions have come forward from council and the federal MP that perhaps the name "Fort Nashwaak" for the future park should be changed to accommodate francophones. Let's clear the air for our taxpayers who pay the bills.
Cost of Official Bilingualism Is Understated

Dear Editor:
Please allow me to comment on the letter that appeared in The paper on Jan. 29 entitled, "Cost of official languages worth it." We, as burdened taxpayers, know full well what the calculations of a government are, especially when a figure of $493 million is put forward for all to see on bilingualism. It is my understanding, from what I have read, that a chartered accountant from Toronto tried for nine months to pry the truth out of the Commissioner of Official Language's office about the cost of bilingualism. Why did the commissioner of languages close up like a clam when all he had to do was tell and show that accountant the two-cent cost of bilingualism? "Bilingual Bonus." Does this, for example, mean that everyone who becomes bilingual while working for the government gets a bonus? Good to know the English are going to get something out of this. They say the books in the past N.B. government were cooked. Is it impossible the above figure quoted is from a cooked book? The provincial governments and the federal government are looking for ways to save our beloved health care. The elimination of the true cost of bilingualism would be a start. If everyone should be speaking French, why is the federal government dishing out millions of dollars to the Acadian Society? Is it to learn French? There is no such thing as two most recognized languages in the world. English alone is the most recognized and spoken. Check it out. French may be on par with Spanish. Don't get me wrong, I want my grandchildren to speak other languages. I do not want a government to tell someone who is 50 years old and working for the government to leave their job and go learn French, which has been done on a massive scale at the cost of billions of dollars countrywide. The way Mr. Trudeau set this thing up has cost us billions, not just millions of dollars. His attitude was: Let the English pay for it, and we sure are. The truth is the federal government does not dare tell the people of Canada the true cost of wasteful programs like official bilingualism and multiculturalism, the other tax curse of this country. They do not want the public to know where our taxes on everything except some foods are going. French can be taught without a Language Commissioner's office and without language Gestapo in this country. A classic case of give an inch and a minority will take thousands of miles.

THE MARSHALL DECISION:

Just after the summit ended and Letters to the Editor were starting to dwindle, another incident occurred which again placed race relations in the media spotlight. On September 17,
1999, the Supreme court ruled that Natives in Atlantic Canada had a treaty right to year-round fishing (R. vs. Marshall, 1999)\(^1\). Overnight, Atlantic fishing communities usually advertised for their picturesque tranquility, were immersed in racial conflicts. Violent clashes seeped in overtly racist behaviour became the focus point of all local newspapers. As the days became too cold to fish, tensions slowly dissipated. However, this dispute was just the beginning, forshadowing future clashes over the question of Native rights to all natural resources.

**PUBLICATION:** The Fredericton Daily Gleaner  
**DATE:** 2000.02.08  
**PAGE:** C6  

Natives' Right to Hunt Presents Inequitable Situation, Says Writer

Dear Editor:

There has been an unusual amount of controversy due to the recent ruling of the Supreme Court, which said the Native treaties that are in place are valid and must be adhered to. According to the court ruling, the Native population can harvest our moose and deer indiscriminately. The Natives have a free hand to kill as many moose and deer as they wish, seven days a week, 365 days a year. I recently brought this matter up on Tom Young's "Talk of the Town" show, in Saint John. I made it very clear that the ruling will eventually eliminate all the moose and deer. This was quite evident to me when hunting last fall. The word was out that about 15 moose were harvested by the Natives prior to the opening of the season. Their overkill showed up as there were no moose harvested by hunters in the immediate area. It is very discouraging to see a vehicle on the road with two moose on the back and driven by a Native. The court ruling has effectively destroyed the hunting season for non-Natives and will no doubt show up as a significant drop in revenue for the government during the hunting season this year. After my short talk on the radio program, a chief from the Oromocto band came on the show and the first thing he said was I must be a racist. It is very difficult to say anything without being labelled a racist. He also said that the moose shot by hunters on his reservation was consumed by Natives; the meat was evenly divided up among reserve inhabitants. I find this very hard to believe as the word is out that a person could go in many places in the province and buy moose meat at a dollar a pound from some of the Natives. If we are to maintain a viable hunting season, there have to be restrictions placed on those who have no

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\(^1\) After spending 11 years in prison for murder, Mr. Marshall was found not guilty. A Royal Commission concluded, "the fact that Marshall is a Native was a major factor in his wrongful conviction" (Head, 1991, p. 10).
sense of conservation and will over-kill at every opportunity. I cannot see how we can place legislation on the books dealing with the all-consuming decision of the Supreme Court. As it stands, the court has created a massive discrimination situation where the treaties override the rights of the majority in the province. This will continue to cause serious problems in the province.

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown, PEI)
DATE: 99.10.15
PAGE: A1

When Will the Handouts End?

Dear Editor,
I am 14 years old and have never written a letter to the paper before. However, after getting upset about what I am seeing on the news, I decided to take my parents advice and write a letter. I belong to a family of fishermen. When I grow up, I want to be a fisherman. But how is this going to happen if the Natives keep fishing until there is nothing left? I go to school with Indians and some of them are my friends. I have nothing against them. But I know that if my dad just gave me whatever I wanted I would never learn to do things on my own. That’s what the government is doing with the Native people. We have to stop giving them everything and spoiling them. We’re not doing them any favours. When will the handouts end and people realize that we all have to work for ourselves?

PUBLICATION: The Moncton Times and Transcript
DATE: 99.10.12
PAGE: A1
BYLINE: Chris Morris

Racism, Fear, Anger Divide Fishing Port

After years of peaceful coexistence, Burnt Church today is a community torn by fear, anger and racial tension. "There was always a little bit of racism here," says Robert Sylliboy, a Mi'kmaw fisherman and carpenter. "It wasn't blown out of proportion but behind your back, you could hear, 'You dirty Indian, go back to the reservation. We don't need you here.' Now, it's not behind your back, it's to your face."

The Supreme Court of Canada's decision recognizing a priority right of Maritime Natives to hunt and fish changed more than the legal landscape, it has fundamentally altered life in this pretty seaside village on New Brunswick's eastern shore.

"As long as they stay over there on their side and I stay over here, I'm happy," says one
An elderly Burnt Church resident, staring warily at the reserve side of the community. The non-Native man won't give his name, saying he doesn't want to be any more of a target than he believes he already is. That's the way it is with many people, both Native and non-Native, in this community of roughly 1,300, the vast majority of whom are Mi'kmaw.

"One of our sacred sites has been desecrated, there are threats of violence and our people have been subjected to racial slurs," says Mi'kmaw adviser Alex Dedam, explaining the atmosphere of distrust. "But we have the right to go fishing. Why, in this country of ours, can't people exercise their rights?"

On Sunday, federal Fisheries Minister Herb Dhaliwal imposed a limit of 600 lobster traps on Burnt Church Natives. Speaking from Ottawa, he said officials with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans will enforce that guideline. It is not clear what that decision will do to the tensions in this community. No charges have been laid against non-Natives or Natives during a week of vandalism and violence in the area.

Burnt Church is located off the highway leading to New Brunswick's Acadian peninsula in the northeastern corner of the province. It's in a region called Miramichi, an old Indian name which elders say means "land of the Mi'kmaw." Driving down the Burnt Church road, visitors pass attractive homes, small farms and white churches. The road sweeps past a large wharf that juts out into the sparkling Miramichi Bay, then carries on past boarded-up summer homes, most of them large houses dating from the last century. But as the road continues, the reserve comes into view and the homes become shabbier, untidy, obviously poorer. Dogs and children run loose with happy abandon. There is no burnt church, although there is burned rubble on a point of land in the reserve where Natives had built an arbour for sacred ceremonies. It was destroyed last week. There was a burned church hundreds of years ago, back in the 18th century when British troops destroyed an Acadian place of worship. But that was back in a time when Acadians and the Mi'kmaw looked after each other - two threatened people surviving in a treacherous wilderness. Last week, a Mi'kmaw fisherman burned an Acadian flag he had draped over a lobster trap. The community is divided over who gets access to the valuable lobster in the bay, when and how much. Although the commercial season has been closed since early summer, Native fishermen grabbed their lobster traps and went fishing immediately after the Supreme Court delivered its contentious decision Sept. 17 recognizing centuries-old treaties that give Maritime Natives unlimited hunting and fishing. Although Natives have long fished the bay, they were restricted to a food fishery and any work they could get on commercial boats. Only about 10 people on the reserve hold the prized commercial licences. Non-Native
fishermen in the area are furious that Burnt Church Natives have ignored the season. On Oct. 3, hundreds of Native lobster traps were destroyed, a crime that triggered a cycle of retaliation, arson, fights and injuries.

"It's the worst possible place this could have happened," says Rick MacLean, associate editor of the Miramichi Leader newspaper. "It's an area that doesn't have a lot of jobs, so when you have work that pays well, you protect it. It's a powder keg." A large police presence has quelled the violence, but some of the roughly 100 non-Natives in Burnt Church, many of them retired, are still nervous.

"They're scared to death," says Evan Savoy, who was raised in Burnt Church. "No, not scared, they're terrified." Savoy says some non-Native people have temporarily left the community, driven away by threats of bodily harm. For his part, he has put more lights in his backyard, and police cars are usually parked in front of his house.

There has never been unrestrained intermingling between the Native and non-Native communities of Burnt Church, but there has been comfortable accommodation.

"There is some sense here, at times, of two solitudes, but there's also the reality that the people work together, they live side by side and they play hockey together," says Rev. Dan Kirkegaard, who ministers at the local United church. "Over the last 30 to 40 years, basically, it has been a cordial existence." That's the way many Natives view the relationship as well.

"Before, we used to go up to people and say 'Hi, how ya doing?' But now, you have to wonder. I don't know if I should say 'Hi.' If I say 'Hi', is he going to tell me where to go?" says Sylliboy. Both Kirkegaard and Sylliboy acknowledge there has always been underlying racism that, suddenly, is much more obvious.

Chief's Agree to Shutdown All-day Meeting Results in Proposed 30-day Fishing Ban

Atlantic Native chiefs said Wednesday they will ask their people to voluntarily stop fishing lobster for 30 days, in a move to solve the recent fishery crisis. The chiefs announced the proposed moratorium, to begin Saturday, after a daylong meeting in Halifax and after the Federal fisheries minister had left assuming no moratorium.

Phil Fontaine, chief of the Assembly of First Nations, credited Mi'kmaw Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy with "bringing this together as he did in the final moments here this afternoon. This is a decision that's been taken by the chiefs in the best interest of their people. Quite
clearly, their decision was not based on self-interest, but it was a decision taken (considering) all the people affected by the very important decision by the Supreme Court (of Canada)," said Mr. Fontaine. The court case revolved around Donald Marshall Jr. of Cape Breton, whose 1996 conviction for catching and selling 210 kilograms of eels out of season and without a licence was overturned.

Mr. Marshall was trembling and upset on his way into the chiefs' meeting Wednesday. He said he is worried by the violence and racism that "red necks" have demonstrated. "I'm shaking now," he told reporters. "Our people will do nothing (violent), because we know better than that. Let these guys have their fun now, and if . . . Canadians don't accept what happened (with the court decision), then that's too God damned bad. Our own government and everybody else has turned their backs on us," said Mr. Marshall, whose wrongful conviction for a Sydney murder and subsequent 11 years in prison prompted an inquiry into Nova Scotia's justice system. But a while later, Mr. Marshall was calmer and said the fisheries minister appeared supportive of the Native cause. "He's not a bad guy," he said.

Yet a spokesman for the Burnt Church reserve in New Brunswick was resolute that fishermen will keep fishing. Native lobster traps were destroyed there over the weekend, and a religious site was torched Tuesday. Band spokesman Alex Dedam said the community's 35 to 40 fishermen don't want to stop now because Miramichi Bay will freeze over within weeks.

"I don't think we're doing anything wrong. We're doing what is legally our right," said Mr. Dedam, an adviser to the chief. He said Burnt Church Natives had about 3,500 lobster traps before the vandalism. The band council planned to have 1,000 new traps in the water by today. He said Native fishing is a drop in the bucket compared to the non-Native commercial fishery. Department of Fisheries and Oceans figures back that up. In New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, there are 3,400 non-Native lobster licenses accounting for one million traps. That compares with about 7,000 Native traps in those provinces. "In order to conserve the species, some of those licences that (non-Natives) have will probably have to be retired. . . . In the meantime, make room for the aboriginal fishers, because we're going to be in the water," Mr. Dedam said early Wednesday.
### APPENDIX B — INTERVIEWS

**SARA:**
- October 15, 1997
- December 2, 1997
- December 3, 1997
- January 10, 1998
- February 3, 1998
- February 13, 1998
- April 15, 1998
- April 16, 1998
- April 21, 1998
- May 12, 1998
- June 3, 1998
- November 10, 1998
- February 14, 2000

**STUDENTS:**
- January 8, 1998
- January 13, 1998
- January 15, 1998
- January 21, 1998
- February 3, 1998
- February 13, 1998
- April 21, 1998
- April 23, 1998
- May 6, 1998
- May 8, 1998
- May 12, 1998
- May 20, 1998
- June 8, 1998
- June 12, 1998
- June 15, 1998
- June 21, 1998

**MISCELLANEOUS:**
- Alexandra McCallum: November 10, 1999
  - April 14, 2000
- Pierre Fornier: August 8, 1998
- Lucie LeBouthillier: December 9a, 1999
- Pascal Robichaud: December 9b, 1999
- Aparna Sanyal – February 16, 2000
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